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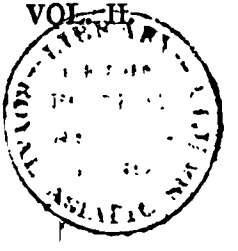
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PRACTICAL AND FAMILIAR

SERMONS.

VOL. II.



PRACTICAL AND FAMILIAR

SERMONS,

DESIGNED FOR

PAROCHIAL AND DOMESTIC INSTRUCTION.

BY THE REV. EDWARD COOPER,

RECTOR OF HAMSTALL-RIDWARE AND OF YOXALL IN THE COUNTY OF STAFFORD, AND FORMERLY FELLOW OF ALL-SOULS' COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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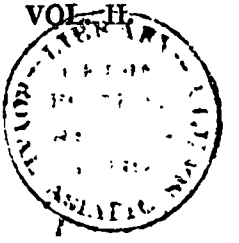
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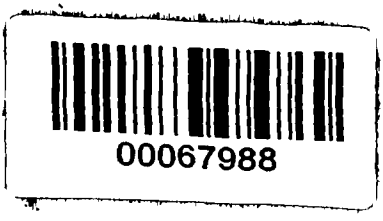
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PRACTICAL AND FAMILIAR

SERMONS.

VOL. II.





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TO

THE REVEREND

THOMAS LEIGH, M.A.

OF STONELEIGH ABBEY IN THE COUNTY OF WARWICK,

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

ARE

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

IN TESTIMONY OF

GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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SERMON I.

ON THE EFFICACY OF THE WORD OF GOD, AND ON THE WAY OF RECEIVING IT.

1 THESSALONIANS, ii. 13.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the Word of Men, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

WHILE those, who preach the Gospel, are answerable for the trust committed to them; those who hear it are not less answerable for the use which they make of this great privilege. While ministers are solemnly charged to "take heed unto their doctrine;" the people are not less solemnly warned to "take heed how they hear." In truth, the Word of God is not to be trifled with. It is either "the savour of

life unto life;" or, "the savour of death unto death." It must make us better; or it will leave us worse. If it does not raise us to heaven, it will sink us into deeper condemnation. Feeling then how greatly we are concerned in this matter, let us propose to ourselves the example of those Thessalonians, of whom St. Paul, in the text, speaks with so much satisfaction and comfort. He tells them that he "thanked God on their account, without ceasing:" and why? "Because" (he adds) "when ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of Men, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." He recollected that serious attention, with which they had listened to the preaching of the Word of God, that ready submission which they had yielded to its doctrines, and that exemplary obedience to its precepts, by which they had showed its power on their hearts; and the recollection of these things furnished him with a constant source of thankfulness and consolation under his many afflictions. Would to God! that all who hear his Word, would receive it in the same manner as these Thessalonians did: that they would "receive it not as the Word of Men, but (as it is in

truth) the Word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe!" With the view of stirring us up to follow this example, as well as of farther explaining the subject, let us consider two things here suggested to us:—

I. The description given of the Word.

II. The manner in which it ought to be received.

I. The description here given of the Word may be considered,

First, as to its author: *whose* word it is. It is not, says the Apostle, the word of men. Men are employed as instruments for making known the word; but it is not their own word which they make known. The doctrines, which they teach, are "not cunningly devised fables" of human invention. The word is the Word of God. It contains his message to mankind; reveals his will, and discovers his counsels, so far as he thinks fit to discover them. It is, says St. Paul, in the text, "*in truth* the Word of God." Such was the word which he preached to the Thessalonians; as he calls it in another part of his Epistle, "the Gospel of God."* It had been revealed to him, as he tells the Galatians, by God himself. "I certify

* Chap. ii. 2.

you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." *—Such was the Word preached by all the Apostles of Christ. It was in the strictest sense "the Word of God." They were under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost: "who taught them all things, and brought all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them." So that according to his own declaration to them; "It was not they that spake, but the Spirit of their Father which spake in them." † Such also is the written word contained in the Bible. It is "in truth the Word of God." Men were employed to write, but they wrote under the especial direction and guidance of the Holy Ghost. By his power they were kept from error. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God:" and "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." ‡ So that the *written word* is as certainly the Word of God as that preached by the Apostles themselves; and God as directly speaks to us in the Bible, as he spake

* Gal. i. 11, 12. † Matt. x. 20.
‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16.—2 Peter, i. 21.

to the Jews by the mouth of his Prophets. —The same also may be said of the Word now, and at all times preached by the true Ministers of Christ. They indeed lay no claim to inspiration, or to any extraordinary influence of the Spirit; but still, so long as their preaching agrees with the written Word of God; so long as the doctrine and precepts which they teach, are either contained in Scripture, or are founded on it, or can fairly be drawn from it, the word which they preach, is "in truth the Word of God." They are God's messengers to their fellow-creatures. They speak in his name. They sound forth his truths. And hence it may be justly said, in a lower sense indeed, but not in an improper use of the passage, that "the words which they speak are not theirs, but His, who sends them."

But the description here given of the Word may be considered farther, as to its *effects*. "It effectually worketh in them that believe." God not only makes use of his word as the channel for revealing to us his will, but appoints it as his instrument, for quickening us when dead, and for "creating us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." There is a peculiar power which attends the Word. The Lord pours out his Spirit with his Word; and thus makes the Word effectual

in promoting his work of grace in the soul. St. Peter tells us that those "who have purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."* Hence the Word of God is called in Scripture, "the Rod of his Strength." Hence the Lord enquires, by his Prophet Jeremiah, "Is not my word like as a fire? and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Hence David declares of the Word of God, not only that it "enlightens the eyes, and maketh wise the simple," but also that it "converteth the soul." †

But to obtain clearer notions on this point, we may consider two respects in which the Word effectually works in them that believe.

1. In producing conviction of sin.

Conviction of sin is the beginning of life in the soul. Our Saviour said of the Spirit, that when he should come, he would "convince the world of Sin ‡;" which means, that by his secret work on the heart, he would cause men to see and feel their sins in a way in which they had not seen and felt them before: and this effect he produces by the Word of God; which is therefore called

* 1 Peter, i. 22, 23. † Psalm cx. 2.—Jeremiah, xxiii. 29.—Psalm xix. 7. ‡ John, xvi. 8.

"the Sword of the Spirit;" that effectual instrument, which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." * By this spiritual weapon a man's false peace is destroyed. Hitherto perhaps he has had a good opinion of his own heart. He has thought favourably of his merits and pretensions. Though he has confessed himself to be a sinner, yet he has never *felt* that he is one. He is offended at being told, that he is an enemy to God, and full of all evil. But through mercy he is brought under the faithful preaching of the Word. A divine influence attends the appointed instrument. It comes home with power to his heart. It begins with shaking his self-confidence; by degrees it opens to him his own sinful nature; it brings to his remembrance many sins, which he had long forgotten; shows him how very far he is from being the righteous character, which he has supposed himself to be: teaches him to measure, not only his actions, but even his words and thoughts, by the pure standard of God's law; sets before him the dreadful punishment threatened against sin; till at

* Ephes. vi. 17. —Heb. iv. 12.

length, "convinced of all, judged of all," alarmed at his guilt and danger, he anxiously looks around for help, and cries, "What shall I do to be saved?"

And have *we* not at times felt something of the same effect? When we have heard the Word, have not our consciences been disturbed? Has not a suspicion been raised in us, that we are more guilty than we would willingly believe ourselves to be? Have we not been forced, as it were, to apply what has been said to ourselves, and have felt some serious alarm at our danger? Such convictions, such alarms, have been the working of God's Spirit on our souls. Hitherto, perhaps, we have resisted and stifled them. God grant, that it may not be always thus! God grant that his Word may so effectually fasten on our hearts, as to work in us genuine repentance and real faith!

But farther, the Word of God effectually worketh in them that believe.

2. In binding up the broken heart.—The same instrument which gives the wound, brings also the cure. The Word of God, which convinces the soul of sin, reveals also a way in which that sin may be forgiven. It proclaims a gracious Saviour, whose "blood cleanseth from all sin." It sets before the convinced and trembling sinner a remedy

exactly suited to his wants. It makes known to him the power, goodness, and sufficiency of Christ; the glory of his person as God and man, the purpose of his coming into the world, to save sinners; the fulness of that atonement which he has made for sin on the cross; that perfect righteousness, which he has wrought out for every believing soul; his merciful calls to the weary and the heavy-laden: and his readiness to receive and pardon, and cleanse every penitent sinner who comes to him. These great and seasonable truths are revealed in the Word, while the Spirit effectually applies them to the heart. The sinner, burdened with a sense of guilt, receives with joy the tidings of a Saviour; listens with eagerness to the account of his power, grace, and goodness; longs to be found among the number of those whom he came to save; calls earnestly upon him for mercy; is gradually taught to lay hold of his precious promises; in proportion as he simply trusts to him for grace and righteousness, finds his hopes revived; and thus, at length, obtains solid comfort, and is filled with peace and joy in believing.

And are there not some among us, who can testify to this work also of the Spirit on their own souls: who have felt the blessed influence of the Word in binding up the

broken heart, and in filling it with comfort and hope, with peace and joy? May the Lord grant us to abound more and more in these proofs of the efficacy of his Word! May he greatly increase among us these glorious instances of his grace and love, and send forth his Spirit to carry the Word with life and power to every heart!

Such is the description here given of the Word of God. We consider,

II. In what manner it ought to be received.

It must be clear, that the Word cannot be properly received, unless it be received in a manner suitable to its character and importance. It was thus that the Thessalonians received it. The Apostle bears testimony to them, that they received it, "not as the Word of Man, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God."—Thus, if we would receive it as we ought, we must receive it. If we hope to profit by the Word, to give to it that reception which it deserves, we must receive it as the *Word of God.*—This general direction contains several particulars, which may be shortly noticed.

1. To receive the Word as the Word of God, means that we receive it with *attention* and *reverence.* Does God indeed speak, and shall not man listen; *attentively* listen; *reve-*

rently listen? The majesty and the perfections of Him who speaks, demand this of them. If the High and Lofty One, whose Throne is in Heaven, who inhabiteth Eternity, so wonderfully stoops as to address himself to guilty, polluted, perishing sinners; the least which He can expect is, that they should lend an attentive, a reverential ear to what He says. God himself frequently claims to be heard on this very ground, that He is "*the Lord*, who speaketh." Nor can any claim be better founded. He is the Lord who made us; the God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways: the God, who, in an instant, can destroy both body and soul in hell. Surely, then, when He humbles himself to speak to us, it may with reason be said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." — But, my brethren, how seldom is this admonition obeyed! With how little attention, with how little reverence is the Word of God often heard in this favoured land! How many persons are there, who never read the written Word, and who seldom put themselves in the way of hearing it preached! How many persons are there, who, when sitting in God's house, listen to his Word read and preached with a stupid indifference and an ungodly unconcern: who suffer their thoughts to be wholly

fixed on other things; and while they profess to hear the truths of Scripture, are inwardly turning a deaf ear to all that is said! Surely this is not to receive the Word as *the Word of God.* Can we wonder that few reap any lasting profit from the ministry of the Gospel, when they listen to it with minds so senseless and hardened; so little touched by a sense of the Presence and Majesty of Him, whose Word they are called to hear!

2. The general direction before us means, that we receive the Word with *humility* and *teachableness.* It is God who speaketh. Does it become us to cavil at his Word? God is infinitely wise, and knoweth all things. He is true and faithful, and cannot deceive. Shall we then be so absurd, so impious, as to object to any revelations, which he is pleased in mercy to vouchsafe to us? Shall we say, 'This doctrine cannot be true, for I cannot understand it:'— 'This command cannot be right, for I cannot see the reason of it?'— True it is that there may be many things in Scripture, which we can neither explain nor understand. But instead of being surprised that this is the case, we might rather have wondered had it been otherwise: for God's thoughts and ways are far above ours. The answer to every objection is this: 'God

has said it. What further proof can I require? It is *His* Word, therefore, I give full credit to it!' It is on this ground that God himself demands our faith and obedience. He does not say: 'Believe this truth because *you see* it to be true; but because *I tell* you that it is so.' — 'Obey this precept, not because *you perceive the reason* of it; but because *I enjoin it.*' — To receive then the Word as the Word of God, is to receive it with an humble mind; with a disposition to believe and obey it, on the authority of Him, whose Word it is: with a full conviction, that whatever is either plainly revealed in it, or justly to be drawn from it, is most certainly true; whatever objections may *appear* to us to lie against it. This is the disposition which St. James recommends, when he directs us to "receive with *meekness* the ingrafted word*;" and without thus receiving it, we can neither benefit ourselves, nor glorify God: nay, we dishonour him, and shall surely ruin our own souls.

3. To receive the Word as the Word of God, means that we receive it as *his appointed instrument* for the conversion and edification of our souls. We have seen that the Word effectually worketh in them that believe.

* James, i. 21.

We have seen what are the effects, which it is intended to produce. Do we look to it to produce these effects on ourselves? Do we read and hear the Word of God with a real desire that it may effectually work in our hearts, and produce in us true repentance and genuine faith? To this end do we offer up our supplications at the throne of Grace, that God would be pleased to bless his Word to our conviction and comfort? Do we pray that he would make it powerful for awakening our consciences, for discovering to us our sins, and for bringing us to Christ? — One reason why men *receive* so little profit from the word, is that they *expect* so little. They do not consider it to be "(as it is in truth) the Word of God." They regard it merely as intended to convey instruction to the understanding, not as the appointed instrument for converting the heart. Hence they do not pray to feel its saving influence on their souls. They do not pray for the Spirit to accompany the Word, and to mix it with faith in their hearts. My brethren, if we did but pray more constantly and earnestly for God's blessing on what we hear and read, we should soon find a blessed work within, to which, it is to be feared, that some as yet are strangers. If we did but seek to de-

rive more benefit from the Word, we should soon experience more. If we did but receive it as the Word of God, we should surely find it to be His Word, by its powerful efficacy on our souls. That all of us may thus receive and find it, God of his infinite mercy grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord!

SERMON II.

JESUS CHRIST THE ONE GREAT SACRIFICE FOR SIN.

HEBREWS, ix. 22.

Without shedding of Blood is no remission.

THE chief design of St. Paul in this Epistle, was to point out to the Jews the real meaning of their sacrifices; and so to lead them to Christ, the One great Sacrifice for sin. With this view, having reminded them of the continual use of blood in almost every part of their religious worship, he adds, in the words of the text, "without shedding of blood is no remission." This is a truth, which the whole Jewish religion taught; which the whole history of man, as set before us in the Scriptures, teaches; and which I now purpose to explain and apply.

To which end, I shall endeavour,

I. To establish the Fact, that in all ages of the world, the revealed and acceptable way

of the sinner's drawing near to God, has been by "*the shedding of blood.*"

II. To show what the Fact, thus established, proves.

It must be granted that we have no express account of the appointment of sacrifices from the beginning, nor of the exact manner in which Adam, as a sinner, was taught to draw nigh unto God. But we read in the third chapter of Genesis, that "unto Adam and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."* Now it is certain that the beasts, from which these skins were taken, were not slain for purposes of food; because before the flood no leave to feed on the flesh of animals was given. It is therefore *probable*, that they were slain for sacrifices; and that Adam was thus taught in this significant manner to express his belief of the great truth revealed to him, under the first promise of a Saviour, that "without shedding of blood was no remission." This probability is greatly increased by finding, that within a few years after the offering of animals was a distinguishing part of that way of worshipping God, which he accepted. "In process of time, it came to pass, that Cain brought *of the fruit of the ground*, an offering unto the

* Genesis, iii. 21.

Lord: and Abel, he also brought of the *firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof.* And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering he had no respect." *

But the history of Noah furnishes a more decisive proof to the point in question. In the directions given to the patriarch before his entering into the ark, the division of animals into *clean* and *unclean* strongly intimates that the offering of animals was an usual and an appointed way of worshipping God. For since, as was observed above, animals were not then used for food, on what other account, except on that of their being used for sacrifices, could such a distinction have been made? In this view clean beasts were such as were appointed for sacrifice; and hence for this reason a greater number of these were preserved in the ark, than of the other kinds. "Of every *clean* beast, thou shalt take to thee by *sevens*, the male and his female; but of beasts that are *not clean*, by two, the male and his female." †

What is said of Noah immediately on his coming out of the ark? He "built an altar unto the Lord, and took of every *clean* beast and of every *clean* fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar." — And how was this

* Genesis, iv. 3, 4. † Genesis, vii. 2.

act of worship accepted? "The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." *

At this time it pleased the Almighty to make a farther grant to men, and to permit them to make use of animal food. But in the very terms in which this grant was given there is something particularly suited to our present subject. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb have I given you all things: but flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall 'you not eat." †. The flesh was allowed to be eaten, but the *blood* was forbidden. What was the chief reason of this prohibition? A passage in the seventeenth chapter of Leviticus, where this prohibition is repeated, expressly mentions the reason. "Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood, I will even set my face against that soul, that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people." Now mark the reason: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh

* Genesis, viii. 20, 21. † Genesis, ix. 3, 4.

an atonement for the soul." — Hence it was, that the blood was to be regarded with peculiar reverence and awe.

Look next at the example of Abraham. In what manner did this Father of the faithful, this friend of God, conduct his religious worship? We are told, that he "*built an altar unto the Lord, and* called upon the name of the Lord." * — But especially let us notice the account of that memorable transaction, which is related in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis. Every circumstance in it strongly confirms, with respect to Abraham, the fact which I am endeavouring to establish. The command which he received to offer up his son for a burnt-offering; the preparations which he made for obeying the command; the language in which he spake to his servants; "The lad and I will go yonder and *worship*;" the discourse which passed between him and Isaac on the way; and, lastly, the offering up of the ram caught in the thicket, for a burnt-offering, instead of his son; — these particulars fully prove, that Abraham was *accustomed* to the offering of sacrifices. The practice of worshipping God by burnt-offerings was familiar to him; a practice with which he was well acquainted.

* Genesis, xii. 8.

Such also was the manner in which Jacob worshipped God. At Sichem, at Bethel, he built an altar unto the Lord: and before his going down into Egypt, it is expressly said, that he "went unto Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac." *

It is to be observed, that the instances already mentioned, happened some hundred years before the giving of the Jewish law from Mount Sinai. And in the same class we may also place the example of Job. At what time Job lived is not precisely known, but it is generally admitted that he had no knowledge of the Jewish ceremonial law; and indeed it is probable that he lived before that law was given. Yet we find *him* also acting on the belief, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." For we read in the first chapter at the fifth verse, that Job offered burnt offerings, according to the number of all his children: for he said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and have cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

Now let all these things be put together. Let us consider them attentively: and then say, What is the impression left upon the mind? We see Abel, and Noah, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Job; we see these

* Genesis, xlvi. 1.

illustrious characters, these eminent servants of God, worshipping him with shedding of blood; with sacrifices and burnt-offerings; and can we doubt whether this way of worship were not revealed at first by God himself? To what other cause can we so reasonably assign the universal prevalence of sacrifices, in almost all ages and countries of the world, as to the supposition of a revelation at first given by God, that such was the manner in which only He was to be approached by sinners on a throne of mercy?

But God was pleased to make a still clearer revelation of his will in this respect, to one nation in the world. He chose the family of Abraham to be a peculiar people to Himself. He delivered them from Egypt. He brought them to Mount Sinai. He made a covenant with them; gave to them Laws, and Statutes, and Judgements; and taught them in what manner they should worship him with favour and acceptance. And how was this to be done? By sacrifices and burnt-offerings, and in shedding of blood. The whole Jewish Law teaches most plainly, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." To enter into particulars would go far beyond the limits of the present occasion; but if we turn for proof to the Book of Leviticus, we shall find, that "almost

all things, by the Law, were purged with blood." Yearly, daily sacrifices were appointed to be offered up for the people. The Priests themselves could not draw near to God without a sacrifice. Every offence was to be expiated by a sin-offering. It was not enough that the offender should confess his sin and be sorry for it; but he must bring a bullock, or a lamb, or a turtle-dove, whose blood was to be shed for an atonement. It was with blood that the book of the Law, the people, the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry, were to be sprinkled; while the most dreadful threatenings of vengeance were announced against such as despised this mode of approaching God, and presumed to worship Him in any other way. Thus every thing proclaimed the aweful truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

Having thus endeavoured to establish the Fact, I now proceed,

II. To show what the Fact, thus established, proves.

It proves most clearly, that from the first entrance of sin into the world, there has been but one way of salvation for sinners; but one way in which they could approach and worship God with acceptance; namely, through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus

Christ. — That the offering of innocent animals did not in itself make any real atonement for sin, is a point which must be readily granted. St. Paul, in this Epistle, justly argues, that the *frequent offering* of the Jewish Sacrifices showed that they did not make the comers thereunto perfect: "For then," he asks, "would they not have *ceased* to be offered? Because the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sin every year." Nay, having proved this point, he goes still farther; and asserts, that such sacrifices not only *did* not, but in the very nature of things *could* not, make any real atonement: "for," he adds, "it is not *possible* that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." * — The very design of an atonement was to preserve the glory of the divine perfections, and to show that God, even in the very act of pardoning the Sinner, was a just and holy God. But there was nothing in the blood of bulls and of goats, which could show this aweful truth. Had millions and millions of animals been slain, as a sacrifice for sinners; yet the Righteousness of God would not have been

* Heb. x. 1, 2, 3, 4.

made known by such a sacrifice. There was nothing in the shedding of their blood, which could show forth the holiness of the divine Character, God's hatred of sin, and the honour which he puts upon his law.

But if this be the case; if the death of animals did not, and could not, of itself, take away sin, what end did it answer? Why was the offering of sacrifices the appointed, the acceptable mode of worshipping God, if these sacrifices had no real virtue in themselves, and could do nothing towards taking away guilt, and purging the conscience from dead works? There can be only one answer. These sacrifices were types or representations of Christ. We are indeed expressly told, that "the law was a shadow of good things to come." And hence St. Paul affirms Christ to be "our passover, who was sacrificed for us."* The blood of the numberless animals which were slain was typical of the blood of Christ; and was intended to shadow forth the great and available Sacrifice of the Son of God; and thus to lead forward the views of the offerers to Him, who was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;"—"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the

* 1 Cor. v. 7.

world."* — It cannot, indeed, be affirmed that all the offerers who joined in the sacrifices used them in their typical meaning. That natural disposition which leads men to place any thing in the room of true religion, would doubtless lead numbers to join in the appointed form of worship, without any spiritual feeling, or faith in the promised Saviour. As persons, at this day, make a profession of their faith in Christ, and outwardly join to the institutions of his religion, while in their hearts they have no real dependence on his merits and intercession for taking away their guilt; so, doubtless, many would then bring their bullocks and their lambs, and would offer the prescribed sacrifices, while they looked not forward to this precious blood of Christ, which the blood of their sacrifices represented: and it was this proneness to rest in the performance of the outward ceremonies, this profane use of the sacrifices without any suitable feelings in the heart, which was so frequently reproved and condemned by the Prophets. But, on the other hand, that the true spiritual worshippers of God did really offer these sacrifices with an eye to the atoning blood of Christ, as the promised "seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head," we have very substantial

* Rev. xiii. 8. — John, i. 29.

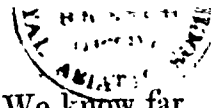
proof. We are directly told, that "by *faith* Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Our Lord expressly says, that "Abraham rejoiced to see *his* day; and he saw it, and was glad." We are informed that Moses "esteemed the reproach of *Christ* greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." * And with respect to David, so abundantly does he speak in the Psalms of the sufferings and glory of Christ, that we can have no doubt of his looking forward by faith to the Messiah, though his knowledge of Him might be less clear and distinct than ours. Job expressly declares, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." † Nor are we to consider these instances as rare and singular cases, but as examples of the faith, the views, the sentiments of all those, who, before the coming of Christ in the flesh, worshipped God in spirit and in truth. They all looked forward to Christ, as the promised Saviour, whose blood only could take away their sins. Thus, in every age, the way of salvation has been the same. The only difference has been this. The people of God in former times looked forward to a Saviour who should come into

* Hebrews, xi. 4.—John, viii. 56. — Heb. xi. 26.
† Job, xix. 25.

the world; we now look back on one, who has come. They trusted for remission of sins to the blood which in after times should be shed; we trust for pardon to the blood which *has* been already shed. They were taught to show their faith in the sacrifice which *was to be made*, by the offering of animals and the shedding of blood; we are taught to declare our trust in the sacrifice which *has been* made, by the eating of bread, and the drinking of wine. Still, under both dispensations, Christ is all in all. Under both, the same truth is taught, the same profession is made, the same fact is established, that "without shedding of blood," the blood, not of bulls and of goats, but "the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot," there is no remission.

In shortly applying this subject,

1. Let us be reminded of the great obligations which we are under to bless and praise God for the clearer light under which we live. "Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things, which we see, and have not seen them." Those truths, which they saw afar off, are brought nigh to us. What was taught to them by types and shadows, is plainly revealed to us. The veil is drawn aside; and, compared with



them, *we* see "face to face." We know far more of that precious blood-shedding than they knew. We know distinctly *whose* blood it was, and *how* it was shed.—But then, let us remember, my brethren, that to whom God has given much, of them He will require the more. If He have favoured us with clearer light, He expects from us a suitable improvement. Less excuse can be made for us, if we neglect the Salvation of the Gospel. Nay, what excuse can be made for us? "If he that despised Moses's law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?"

2. Let us direct our attention to the great truth which we have been considering: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." We have all a great work upon our hands, the salvation of our immortal souls. We have to make our peace with God, to procure the forgiveness of our numerous sins.—But there is no forgiveness of sins, except through the sacrifice of Christ. It is the blood of Jesus only which cleanseth from sin, and which alone can purify our guilty souls. Let us beware, then, how we presume to seek forgiveness in any other way. Men make to themselves many savi-

ours, which they put in the place of Christ. Ask them on what grounds they hope to be forgiven. They will tell you, because they repent of their sins; because they are sorry for them; because they have left off some bad habits; because they have done some good actions; because their conduct is in general decent and moral; because they are regular in discharging religious duties. But these things are not saviours. They indeed accompany salvation, but they cannot take away sin. They cannot reconcile us to God. It is only by the blood of Jesus, that we are brought nigh. Without an interest in his blood there is no remission. Here, then, let our peace be sought, where only it can be found. Let us seek it in the blood of Jesus. Let us have our hearts and consciences sprinkled with this blood. So shall we be safe from the destroying Angel. — For let us remember,

3. That as, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission;" so, through the precious blood-shedding of Jesus, there is full remission for every sin. Perhaps we tremble at the thought of our sins. The sight of them fills us with alarm. We are ready to conclude that they can never be blotted out. But let us not despair. There is power in the blood of Jesus to cleanse from all sin.

Let us wash in this fountain, and though our "sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This is the Gospel which is to be preached to every creature. It is preached this day to us. May we embrace it and be saved!

Lastly, let us also remember, that while through the precious blood-shedding of Christ, there is full forgiveness provided for all sin; yet it is sin confessed, lamented, and forsaken, to which alone this forgiveness will really be granted. Christ has not died to save us *in* our sins, but *from* them. None but the truly penitent will have an interest in his atoning sacrifice; for none but the truly penitent will, in fact, apply to him for pardon. Sinners, who continue impenitent, do not believe in Jesus. Consequently there is no remission for them. Let us then take heed, lest we deceive ourselves. Let us not suppose, while we wilfully retain the practice of sin in our lives, or the love of it in our hearts, that we can have any scriptural hope in Christ. Let us show that we indeed belong to Him, and have washed our garments in the blood of the Lamb, by "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

SERMON III.

ON RECEIVING THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN.

2 CORINTHIANS, vi. 1.

We then, as Workers together with Him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain.

WE are here reminded of the office and employment of the Ministers of the Gospel. They are "Workers together with God:" they are his instruments for bringing sinners to salvation. They are commissioned to publish the glad tidings of the Gospel, and to "beseech men not to receive this grace in vain:" while the Lord accompanies their preaching with his Spirit, and so blesses his word for "converting the soul, and making wise the simple." Thus he works *by* his Ministers, and *with* them. The power of grace and glory are his. All their sufficiency is of him. Of themselves they can neither think nor do any thing that is good. But still, without them he seldom

carries on the work of grace in the soul; and thus puts honour on the Office, which He has himself appointed. "We then, as Workers together with Him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain." In discoursing on these words I shall endeavour,

I. To show what is meant by receiving God's Grace in vain.

II. To dissuade you from receiving it thus.

I. Grace, in its strict and proper sense, means *undeserved favour:* a Gift freely bestowed, without any respect to merit in the person to whom it is given, (for, as the Apostle argues, "otherwise grace is no more grace*,") and springing solely from the compassion and kindness of the Giver. By the "Grace of God" in the text, we are to understand the *Gospel*, or that rich provision of unmerited mercy, which God has made known to us through his Son Jesus Christ. Now this Gospel is altogether of grace. It was wholly unmerited by Man. It was freely bestowed on him. God, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us," sent his Son to be our Saviour. Hence the Gospel is called "the Gospel of the Grace of God:" and we are

* Romans, xi. 6.

expressly said "to be saved by Grace." To *receive* this Grace is to receive the offers of it; to have the Gospel preached to us; to have the rich provision which it contains for our perishing souls, set before us. — To receive this Grace *in vain*, is to hear the Gospel to no purpose; to slight the mercies of God; and so far as we are concerned, to defeat the gracious design for which he sent his Son into the world. Now, there are several ways in which men may thus be guilty of "receiving the Grace of God in vain."

1. They are liable to this charge, when they take no care of their souls, and are utterly negligent of the great work of religion. The "Grace of God" is intended to bring men to the knowledge, fear, and love of Him. The aweful Truths set before us in the Gospel are designed to awaken our minds to the important concerns of Eternity; to inspire us with a sense of the value of unseen things; to lead us to a dread of provoking God's displeasure; and to encourage us to seek his favour, and render to Him a willing obedience. But when persons hear the Gospel without its producing in them these effects; when they live under the light of Christianity, and yet still continue in darkness, unmindful of God, of

their souls, and of eternity; when, notwithstanding "that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance," they yet remain impenitent: in this case, they clearly "receive the Grace of God in vain." They are in no respect better for that rich offer of mercy which God has made in the Gospel. So far as they are benefited or influenced by this offer, it might never have been made. Whether Christ have died for them or not, whether God's arms be open to receive them or not, makes no difference to them; they are still earthly, carnal, sensual. The world is followed; their lusts are served; the Devil is obeyed. God warns, threatens, entreats them, to no purpose. They turn a deaf ear to all his words; they slight his mercy, and dishonour his Son.

2. They also are guilty of "receiving the Grace of God in vain," who, while they profess to embrace the Gospel, yet are not seeking to be "justified by faith without the deeds of the law." The doctrine of justification by faith only, is that peculiar doctrine of the Gospel in which the Grace of God most illustriously shines forth. We read that we are "justified freely by his grace:" and St. Paul, in another place, calls a justified state, "*this grace* wherein we stand," and into which "we have access

by faith."* It is the grand glory of the Gospel, that it provides a way in which God can be Just, and at the same time the Justifier of the sinner; a way, in which, without impeaching his own honour, He can pardon the Chief of Sinners, and can account those to be righteous before Him who in themselves are not so. Now, this way is through the sufferings and obedience unto death of his Incarnate Son; who is "of God made unto us Righteousness;" "the end of the law for Righteousness to every one that believeth." In other words, whosoever, utterly renouncing his own Righteousness, is willing to accept the Gift of Righteousness freely put to his account; and to this end, from the heart believes on Jesus Christ; he shall be accepted and treated as Righteous: "being justified by faith, he shall have peace with God through Jesus Christ." Should any one, then, refuse this Gift of Righteousness; or, which is the same thing, should he think of justifying himself by his own works, of standing before God in "his own righteousness, the righteousness which is by the law;" such a person would receive the Grace of God in vain. He would make the rich mercy offered in the Gospel of no effect to *him*. That this was St. Paul's

* Romans, iii. 24. — v. 2.

view of the subject, we can have no doubt; for he expressly says to the Galatians, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified (that is, seek to be justified, or think that you are justified) by the law: ye are fallen *from grace*." And, speaking of himself, he says, "I do not *frustrate* the Grace of God," that is, I do not make it void and of no effect; which he would have done had he sought righteousness by the law: "for (as he adds) if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."*

3. Those also are liable to the charge of "receiving the grace of God in vain" who, though they profess to believe in Jesus Christ for righteousness, yet are not careful to bring forth in their hearts and lives the fruits of righteousness. The Gospel is intended to work for us not only a deliverance from condemnation, but also a renewal of our nature. It is intended to change our hearts, and subdue our corruptions, as well as to free us from punishment, and to justify our persons. Thus, it is said that "the Grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present

* Gal. iv. 4. — ii. 21.

world."* The Grace of God *teaches* us to do these things: not only commands us to do them, and shows the necessity of our doing them; but also instructs us *how* to do them, and provides us with strength (if we will duly seek it) to enable us to do them. If, then, notwithstanding this instruction and provision, we do *not* these things; if, notwithstanding our profession of faith in Christ, we do *not* deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and do *not* live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world; in what respects are we better for that Grace which God hath vouchsafed to us? So far as we are concerned, it bringeth salvation *in vain;* it has appeared *in vain;* we have received it *in vain;* and *in vain* we shall continue to receive it, till we suffer it to produce in us its proper and natural fruits, by purifying our hearts, and leading us to walk in newness of life. If men can so miserably deceive themselves, as to suppose that a barren profession of *belief* in Christ is all which religion requires of them, they show indeed most plainly, that the faith which they pretend to have is no faith, and that the light within them is darkness.

4. Another way in which men receive the Grace of God in vain is, by failing to

* Titus, ii. 11, 12.

keep the ground which they have gained, and so falling back into perdition. To what purpose have they "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, if afterwards they are again entangled therein, and overcome?" To what purpose have they seemingly gone forwards in the way of life, if afterwards they ceased their exertions, and having begun in the spirit, at last end in the flesh? They who run in a race with the hope of winning the prize, must continue to run till they reach the goal. If they stop by the way, they have run so far in vain. It is thus in the Christian Race. We have received *grace in vain*, if satisfied with those things which are behind, we reach not forth unto those things which are before, nor press "towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We have received *grace in vain*, if, "after we have known the way of righteousness, we turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us." And yet how many, it is to be feared, there are, who, having thus "put away a good conscience, concerning faith have made shipwreck:" who, "having once put their hand to the plough, look back," and by degrees return with increased guilt to their

former sin: "whose latter end is worse than the beginning!" — Surely such receive the Grace of God in vain.

Having thus shown what is meant by this expression in the text, and having pointed out some of the ways in which men may be guilty of the charge contained in it, I shall now endeavour,

II. To *dissuade* you from thus receiving the Grace of God in vain.

In entering on this part of my office, I know and feel the utter impossibility of prevailing with you any farther, than that it may please God to bless the attempt. May He, then, on this occasion, work *with* me, and *by* me; that while I pray you in his stead, not to receive his Grace in vain, He may so incline your hearts, that I may not speak in vain!

In the first place, my brethren, let me remind you, that it is the *Grace of God*, which you are urged to receive; the "Gospel of his Grace;" the richest Mercy which the most merciful God can offer to you: Mercy, provided by infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness; Mercy, purchased at an inestimable price, even the precious blood of the Son of God; Mercy, into which the Angels desire to look; and which will for ever

fill the heavenly world with praise and admiration. Surely there must be something in such Mercy, which powerfully demands your acceptance; which loudly calls on you to beware, lest you receive this Grace in vain. How will you answer it to yourselves, if you refuse a gift, which comes thus strongly recommended, and in so forcible a manner claims to be received?

But, remember, farther, it is not to yourselves only that you will have to answer for this conduct; you must answer also to God for the affront which you put upon Him. How could God more clearly have shown his wonderful loving-kindness towards us, than by sending his Son to be our Saviour; and by freely offering to us pardon, righteousness, and eternal life, through Him? How, then, can we more directly affront God than by rejecting his offers, and refusing to be benefited by them? It is as much as to say, 'We despise God's Mercy, and have no 'need of his favour. Though He call us, 'we will not hear. Though He invite us, 'we will not come. Though He offer to 'us his grace, we will not accept it. At a 'great expense to Himself, even with the 'blood of his only begotten Son, He has 'provided salvation for us: but we value 'not salvation. We will set at nought all

'His counsel, and will have none of His 'reproof.' What, I ask, can be more affronting to the Almighty than such language? Yet, such, in fact, is the language of all those who "receive the Grace of God in vain." And what aggravated guilt and misery are they bringing upon themselves? "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" *

In the next place, let me admonish those who are now receiving the Grace of God in vain, of the secret grounds and motives of their conduct. *Why* are you acting thus? *Why* are you thus affronting God, and bringing guilt and misery on yourselves? Because you love sin, and are devoted to earthly and sensual things. You are either too proud to submit to the humbling truths of the Gospel, or too fond of the world and the flesh to renounce them for Christ's sake. — Whatever you may suppose, this is really the cause of your rejection of the Gospel. The self-denial, the mortification of sin, the re-

* Hebrews, x. 29.

nouncing of worldly and fleshly lusts, which the Gospel enjoins on all who truly receive it; these are painful operations, which you have no mind to undergo. You have a high opinion of your own merits: therefore you cannot stoop so low as to be saved "by grace through faith." You place your satisfaction, and look for your happiness in worldly and fleshly enjoyments: therefore you are unwilling to part with them. And hence it comes to pass, that through the love of these things, and from their secret power on your heart, you are receiving the Grace of God in vain. ——But, my brethren, for one moment, seriously think on what you are doing. Think on the worthlessness of those things for the sake of which you are provoking God, and neglecting so great salvation. "The pleasures of sin are but for a season." "The things which are seen are temporal." The world, and all things in it, will, in a short time, be burnt up. But your enjoyment of them will not last even during that short time. You will very soon be torn away from them. Nor even while you remain here, will your happiness in them be complete. You are daily subject to numberless unforeseen interruptions in your schemes of worldly happiness. Pain and

sickness, trouble and disappointment, are evils which every day may break in upon your earthly comforts, and spoil all your sensual enjoyments. And is it for these comforts, for these enjoyments, that you slight and reject the grace of God; which, if heartily received, will make you truly happy here, as well as hereafter?

For, in the last place, consider what must be the certain end of persisting in this rejection of the Gospel. You will assuredly wish at last, that you had not thus received the grace of God in vain; for the consequence must he unavoidable destruction. No hope, no way, no possibility of escape, remains. They who reject the Gospel of God, or, which is the same thing, receive his grace in vain, *must* perish; for nothing but this grace can save the body and soul from everlasting death. Without it there can be no pardon for sin; no renewal of the heart; no fitness for heavenly happiness; no victory over sin and Satan; no triumph over death and the grave; no title to eternal life and glory. All these great blessings are contained in the grace thus offered to you. If you receive it in vain, you lose them all, and you lose them all for ever. There is no way in which you can be pardoned, sanctified, and

glorified, but by the grace of the Gospel. What, then, *must* become of you? Rejecting the counsel of God against yourselves, "nothing remains for you but a fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall destroy the adversary." Having neglected to improve the opportunity vouchsafed to you for working out your salvation, you must be left to the consequences of your sin. You must be condemned as incorrigible enemies to God, and cast into that lake of fire which he has prepared for the devil and his angels.

Let me, then, as a worker together with God, beseech you, brethren, by the riches of divine mercy; by the love of Christ; by the value of your never-dying souls; by the hope of glory; by the weeping and gnashing of teeth which awaits the slothful and wicked servant, "that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain." Use the means, embrace the opportunity, improve the privileges, so freely, so graciously bestowed upon you. Let not the Lord "spread out his hand all the day unto a rebellious people." Let him not say of you, "I called, but they refused. I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded." Close with his offers. Accept his grace. Yield yourselves to him as

willing subjects. Delay not to do it. Take notice of the words which follow the text. "Behold *now* is the accepted time: behold *now* is the day of salvation." May this be the accepted time! May this be the day of salvation to us for his mercy's sake in Jesus Christ!

SERMON IV.

THE GRAND DIRECTION AND PROMISE OF THE GOSPEL.

ACTS, xvi. 31.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

THIS was the answer which St. Paul gave to the affrighted gaoler at Philippi, when, under a sense of his guilt and danger, he anxiously enquired, "What shall I do to be saved?" The question, we must allow, was most important. It was, in fact, the same as if he had asked, 'How shall I escape the 'dreadful punishment which my sins de-'serve?' My brethren, have we not all need to ask the same question? Surely, if we know aright our guilt and danger, we shall every one of us enquire as anxiously as this self-convicted sinner did, "What shall I do to be saved?" And to every one who asks this question the same answer must be given, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou

shalt be saved." These words, indeed, contain the sum and substance of the Gospel; and, therefore, demand universal attention. We may consider them as setting before us two things,

I. The *Grand Direction* of the Gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

II. The *Grand Promise* of the Gospel, "Thou shalt be saved."

I. The Gospel is a covenant of mercy. Man, when he was first created, had no need of mercy; for he was not a sinner. He was then under the covenant of works; that is, he was promised life upon his obedience: "This do, and thou shalt live." But when he had once broken the divine commandment, this covenant was at an end for ever. He was no longer promised life on his obedience; because obedience was no longer in his power. He was become wicked, and unwilling to obey God's law. And, indeed, if this had not been the case, if he had still been capable of doing his whole duty for the time to come, yet future obedience would not make amends for past disobedience. He was now a sinner: as such he had lost the promise of eternal life; and by no doings of his own could recover it. But then it was that mercy interposed.

Then it was that God made known the Gospel. He graciously disclosed another way of obtaining eternal life, in the room of that which had been lost. He revealed the Covenant of Grace. He promised to Adam a Saviour, by believing in whom both he and his posterity might be saved. From this time, then, Salvation has been, not of works, but of Faith. The Kingdom of Heaven has been opened to all believers: not to those who try to make themselves righteous; but to those who by faith accept the righteousness which God has provided for them. — St. Paul, in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, very clearly states this point: "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the Law, saying, that the man which doth these things shall live by them." But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." — Hence it is that the same Apostle, in answer to the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" says in the text, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Observe what is to be the *object* of our faith, — *the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Every truth, which God hath revealed,

must be received by us with faith. But Jesus Christ is the great, the grand object of Faith. To believe on *Him* is the grand Direction of the Gospel. When God preached the Gospel to Adam and Eve, that is, when He made known to them the new way, by which, through grace, they might enter into life, He pointed out Jesus Christ to them as the object of their faith. He spoke of Him as "the promised seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head." Believing this promise, looking forward to this Great Deliverer, who in due time should come into the world, and destroy the works of the Devil, they should be saved.

When the Gospel was preached to Abraham, he was told, that "in him should all Families of the earth be blessed." * What did this promise mean? It meant that from him, in after ages, the expected Saviour should spring; through whom both Abraham himself, and all the world, might be saved. Believing this promise, and relying on this Saviour, Abraham was justified by faith. His faith was counted to him for righteousness. As we are told in the New Testament, "he rejoiced to see the day of Christ;" he looked forward to his coming in the flesh, "and was glad." † The Gospel was after-

* Genesis, xii. 3. † John, viii. 57.

wards preached to the Children of Abraham, the Israelites. How was it preached to them? In types and shadows. Such were their Temple, their High Priests, their Sacrifices. They were all shadows or representations of good things to come. They all pointed out Jesus Christ to the people, and taught them by faith to look to Him for salvation. The Israelites were forbidden to draw nigh to God but through the mediation of their High Priest, and then only with the blood of slaughtered animals, at the Temple of Jerusalem. Now, these laws and restrictions implied, that there was only one way in which sinners could have access to God; namely, through the mediation of another, and by the shedding of blood. And whose mediation, whose blood was thus signified, but the Mediation, the Blood of Jesus Christ; "the High Priest of our profession;" "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world?" *

Thus we see, that before the appearance of Jesus Christ in the flesh, He was still the object of faith. The Grand Direction of the Gospel was always the same—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The only difference was, that the worshippers of God, in those times, were directed to believe on a

* Rev. xiii. 8.

Saviour *who was to come.* We are directed to believe on one *who is come.* Compared with us, also, they had a very imperfect knowledge of Him. They saw only darkly what we see clearly — they did not see, as we plainly see, that he was the Son of God with power. Still, however, He was the object of their faith: on him they believed for salvation, and were saved, if saved at all, as we are, not by works, but by the righteousness of faith.

From this statement we may distinctly see the meaning of the *Direction* in the text.— Jesus Christ is the object of faith. To *believe* on Him, is to believe what the Scriptures tell us of his person and offices; and to rely upon his merits and promises for our own salvation. Faith is described in the word of God, by *receiving* Christ. Christ is set forth as an unspeakable Gift. God so loved the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son to be our Saviour. Faith receives this gift, lays hold of it, and applies it. The language of the true believer is this: 'Has 'God in Mercy offered his Son to be my 'Saviour? I thankfully embrace the offer. 'I make no objection on my part: I receive 'Christ as my Saviour.' And "to as many as thus receive him, to them gives he power to become the Sons of God." — Faith in

Christ is sometimes described by *looking* unto Him. And this expression conveys a striking idea of what is meant by faith. Suppose that we were in circumstances of great distress. Suppose that a person, who was able to deliver us out of our trouble, should come and say to us, 'Lay aside your 'fears. *Look* to me in your extremity:' What should we understand him to say by that expression? We should understand him to say, 'I will be your friend. Be not 'discouraged. Rely on me for help. Trust 'to my word. Confide in my promise of 'providing the relief of which you stand 'in need.' Precisely such is the nature of faith. When we are directed to *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are directed, in other words, to *look unto Him* with an eye of penitence and hope. We are directed to rely on Him for help; to *trust* to his word; to *confide* in his promise of providing the relief of which we stand in need. Faith follows these directions; *does* look unto Jesus, submits to his righteousness, casts its care upon Him, and depends on Him for the accomplishment of all his promises. — Such is the *Grand Direction* of the Gospel. We proceed to consider,

II. The *Grand Promise* of the Gospel: "Thou shalt be saved." Salvation is the

blessing promised. And what is Salvation? It is deliverance from a state of ruin. Such, we have seen, was the state of man, after the fall of his first parents. By sin he was involved in ruin. Such is *still* his state by nature. He is still involved in ruin. He is brought into a most miserable condition; from which, however, the Gospel offers to deliver him. This is the Salvation spoken of. But more clearly to see the greatness of this Salvation, we must consider the several particulars of that ruin into which sin has plunged the human race.

1. It is a state of Wrath: a state of variance and enmity with God. This is a necessary consequence of sin. God is infinitely holy, and cannot but look on sin with just abhorrence. There can be no peace between God and the Sinner. Sin is, in fact, a rebellion against God: a direct attack upon his great and glorious perfections. Consequently it must be hateful to Him. But what a dreadful state is this! That a creature should be at enmity with that blessed God in whose favour is life! That a creature, whose being, whose breath, whose comfort every moment depend on God, should be the object of his displeasure and wrath! How miserable, how deplorable a situation! Yet such is the state of fallen man: "being

by nature born in sin, he is the child of wrath."

2. It is a state of condemnation. This is another necessary consequence of sin. Sin brings punishment. The holy law of God denounces a righteous sentence on every transgressor. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." * And what is death? It is not merely the death of the body. It is something far more dreadful — the death of the soul; eternal misery in hell. "The wicked shall be turned into hell." † This is the sentence denounced against transgressors. This is the dreadful punishment which man has incurred by sin. For a short time the execution of the sentence may be deferred: but the threatened vengeance finally awaits him, and at his departure out of life overwhelms him with deserved and everlasting misery. — Behold another part of man's wretched state by nature.

3. It is a state of bondage. Man is naturally sunk into the most abject servitude. He is led captive by Satan at his will. Having renounced the Service of God, he is become the servant of the Devil: he obeys his orders, fulfils his pleasure, and serves his

* Ezek. xviii. 4. — Rom. vi. 23.

† Psalm ix. 17.

interests. Unable, because unwilling, to break the chain with which he is bound, he endures the tyranny, and gratifies the malice of this his most inveterate enemy. While he serves the Devil, he serves also his own lusts. Sin has dominion over him. He is under the bondage of corruption. He loves the ways, the work, the gratifications of sin; and as he feels no desire, so he makes no attempt to deliver himself out of his wretched and disgraceful slavery. This circumstance completes the misery of his fallen state.

Blessed, however, be the mercy and the wisdom of God! there is yet hope for man. Lost and ruined as he is, he may yet be saved. A suitable and sufficient remedy is provided for every particular in his miserable state. The salvation offered is as complete as the misery incurred.

Is the sinner at enmity with God? A way of reconciliation is open. Christ has slain the enmity: he has taken it away, and has made peace by the blood of his cross. Those who "sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Jesus." * He is "our peace." God is well pleased with this sacrifice; which has been made for sin; and for the sake of it, is fully reconciled to all penitent believers in Jesus. They are no

* Ephes. ii. 13.

longer children of wrath, but dear children. He embraces them with the arms of his mercy. He loves them freely, confers on them the best gifts, and delights over them to do them good.

Is man in a state of Condemnation? By the Gospel he is delivered from this state. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."* They were under sentence of eternal death: but through Jesus the sentence is repealed. He has for them satisfied the demands of the law. He suffered the penalty which they deserved to suffer. They are acquitted of every charge. They are found complete in Him. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." "Christ hath redeemed them from the curse of the Law, having himself been made a curse for them." They are become "the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."† Through Jesus, they are not only delivered from the pains of hell, but have received a title to eternal glory. They shall reign with Christ in his kingdom for ever and ever.

Is man naturally in a state of bondage? The Salvation, provided in the Gospel, con-

* Rom. viii. 1.

† Rom. viii. 31—34. Gal. iii. 13—26.

tains also a complete deliverance from bondage. Christ "proclaims liberty to the Captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." He says to the Prisoners, "Go forth: I have found a ransom." He has overcome the Devil, and spoiled principalities and powers. He has bruised the Serpent's head; and in due time will bruise him under the feet of all his people. He has disarmed death of its sting, and has vanquished the power of the Grave. But, especially, He has provided deliverance from the power of sin. By the inspiration of his Holy Spirit he enlightens the understanding, turns the will, purifies the affections, creates all things new within; and thus enables those who were the wretched slaves of lust, of pride, of passion, — who once lived after the flesh, — to walk in newness of life, to subdue their corruptions, and to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Such is the complete deliverance, the rich Salvation, provided in the Gospel. What Salvation, what Deliverance can be compared with this? — The Salvation of Noah in the Ark was a *great* Salvation. While all the people of the earth were swept away by the waters of the Flood, he and his family were wonderfully preserved amidst this general destruction. — The deliverance of Lot out of

Sodom was a *great* Deliverance. When the Lord overthrew the cities of the plain with fire from heaven, he sent his Angel and delivered Lot. All the inhabitants of Sodom perished, but *he* was saved alive.—The deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt was a *great* deliverance. God brought them out of bondage with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm. He laid waste the land of Egypt with his plagues; but he preserved his people. He overthrew Pharaoh in the waters; but he brought Israel safely through the midst of the sea.

None of these deliverances, however, can be compared with the Salvation of the Gospel. They were but feeble representations of it. For how can deliverances from temporal evils be compared with a Salvation from Eternal Misery? Can the Floods of waters, poured in on the old world be compared with the floods of Divine Wrath, which will for ever overwhelm the unpardoned soul? Can the fire rained on Sodom be compared with that unquenchable fire with which God will consume his incorrigible enemies? Can the bondage of Egypt be compared with the dreadful Bondage of Sin and Satan? The deliverance of the soul from wrath, from condemnation, from the slavery of sin, as much exceeds in value and importance all

these deliverances, as the soul in value and importance exceeds the body. No salvation can be put in competition with the Salvation of the Soul.—This is the Salvation, of which the Apostle speaks in the text, when he says, "Thou shalt be saved." This is the Salvation which forms the grand and distinguishing Promise of the Gospel.

By way, then, of applying the subject, let us remember, my brethren, that this "promise is unto us, and to our children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." But let us farther remember, that it is not an absolute, unconditional promise. There is a condition prescribed. We must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. On this condition only shall we be saved. We have seen that this is the grand direction of the Gospel. Let us comply with the direction, and the promise shall assuredly be ours. Faith in Christ, and Salvation, are inseparably joined together. If we have faith in Him, we shall certainly be saved: but if we have not faith in Him, we shall as certainly perish. Such was the tenour of our Lord's commission to his Apostles, "Preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." *

* Mark, xvi. 16.

— But some, perhaps, may object to this statement, as making the road to heaven wide and easy. 'If faith (they say) will save 'us, there will be no great difficulty in ob- 'taining eternal life; for there is no great 'difficulty in believing.' — But whosoever holds this language betrays the grossest ignorance. To *believe*, is a work of all others the most difficult. If faith, indeed, were nothing more than merely giving credit to the facts related, or to the doctrines taught in Scripture, then it is true, to believe would be an easy work. But faith, the faith of which we speak, is something very different from this. It is a work in the heart. It is a sincere, a cordial acceptance of the offers of the Gospel. And is not this a difficult work? Consider how many things it includes; things directly contrary to our natural heart. To have faith implies that we have a deep sense of our guilty and sinful state: an utter renunciation of our own righteousness; a holy abhorrence of all sin; an entire submission to the will of God; and an humble, a simple dependence on Jesus Christ for salvation. Without having these things, we cannot have true faith. And are not these things difficult to be acquired? Let any one make the trial, and he will find them so. Let any one who has

made the trial, be asked, and he will tell you that he has found them so. He will tell you, that of all works, *to believe* is the most difficult. The fact is this. Unbelief is deeply rooted in our hearts, it is intimately woven into our very nature. Faith is an holy principle, and we are naturally unholy. Faith is an humbling principle, and we are naturally proud. — In short, *to believe* is a work naturally impossible to man. It is a divine work. It is God who creates faith in the heart: and no man can really believe to the saving of his soul, till God hath given him grace to believe.

Would we then be partakers of the grand promise of the Gospel? Would we be saved? Let us sit down and count our cost. We cannot be saved without *believing*. We cannot believe unless God give us grace to believe. But he will give us this grace, if we earnestly seek it by the appointed means. — "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." * The reading and hearing of the Word of God, are the means usually blessed for producing faith in the heart. Let us, then, be diligent and earnest in the discharge of these duties. But especially, let us be instant in prayer. Let us

* Rom. x. 17.

pray for faith. Let us pray that we may have grace to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. No one ever prayed in earnest for this blessing, without in the end obtaining it. No one ever shall pray in earnest for it, without obtaining it. Let us be earnest, be importunate, in asking for this gift. Our salvation depends on our procuring it: and for our comfort we are assured, "that all things whatsoever we shall ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive." *

* Matthew, xx. 21.

SERMON V.

THE MERCY AND JUSTICE OF GOD.

EZEKIEL, xxxiii. 11.

As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked; but that the Wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways: for why will ye die?

ONE great design of the Bible, is to give us right thoughts of God; and thus to correct those false notions of Him, which we are so apt to have. There are two ways in which men frequently think of God; both of which are equally dishonourable to him, and hurtful to themselves. They either regard him as a hard and severe tyrant, whom it is impossible to please, and who delights only in punishment: or, on the other hand, they consider him as a Being, who is little concerned at what men do, and who is so backward to punish, as readily to pardon every offender on the most trivial excuse.

Now it is plain that such thoughts of God must lead to bad consequences. They must either sink men into slavish fear and sullen despondency; or must raise them to unwarranted hopes, and a careless presumption: both which states of mind are as far distant from the spirit and temper of true religion, as the notions of God, on which they are founded, are from the real character given of Him in Scripture. In proof of this remark, let us attend to the text: and see what the Lord there says of Himself. — "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" In these words the Lord defends his character from the injurious aspersions which sinners cast on it. He solemnly denies the charge of injustice and tyranny: and expressly declares his readiness to receive every penitent offender: while in the very way in which He makes this declaration, He as plainly shows that He "will by no means clear the guilty." In pursuing this object, I shall endeavour to explain and illustrate two important Truths: the First of which is *stated*, the Second is *implied*, in the text. They are these: —

I. That God hath no pleasure in the death of the Wicked: but that the Wicked turn from his way and live.

II. That if the Wicked do not turn from their evil ways, they will surely die.

I. In explaining the first of these Truths, I would begin with reminding you, that by the *death* of the Wicked is here meant, not merely the death of the body in this world, but the death of the body and soul in the world to come; what is called in the Book of Revelation, "*the second death*," and in the Burial Service of our Church, *Eternal Death*; in other words, *Everlasting Punishment in Hell.* So, in like manner, by the word *live*, we are to understand, the being delivered from this death, and the dwelling for ever in heaven, with God in glory. The Truth, then, which we are considering, is this; God hath no pleasure in the punishment of wicked men. Their misery and torment will afford him no gratification. He does not desire their eternal death. On the contrary, he would rather that they should be saved: He would rather that they should renounce their wickedness, and return to Him by true repentance, and so become Heirs of eternal life. He will have pleasure in receiving penitent sinners to Heaven; but

none in condemning impenitent sinners to Hell.

It must be clear, that when the Lord speaks thus of Himself, He speaks after the manner of men, in condescension to the weakness of our capacities: and many curious and difficult questions might doubtless be started on this subject. But, my brethren, let us suppress a vain and an unprofitable disposition of prying into secret things. Let us not seek to be wise above what is written. Let us be satisfied with that knowledge of God, which he has been pleased to vouchsafe us of Himself, and humbly learn to think of Him, according to the representations given in his word.

When, in the text, the Lord declares himself as "having no pleasure in the death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live:" let us remember, that He confirms this declaration in the most solemn language which the Almighty could use; saying, "As I live, saith the Lord God." Nor is the text the only passage of Scripture in which he gives this view of Himself. In another place, he thus appeals to the persons who would think otherwise of him: "Have I any pleasure at all, that the Wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways

and live?" With this representation, agrees also that of the Apostle St. Peter, who expressly says, that the Lord "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." * What, indeed, are all the gracious calls, invitations, and promises of Scripture, the earnest admonitions to repentance, the rich declarations of God's abounding mercy and goodness; but so many proofs, that he "desireth not the death of the wicked, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live?"

Let us notice, also, God's daily, actual dealings with men, and see whether they do not strikingly illustrate the Truth before us. If the Lord really wished the death of Sinners, how easily might He accomplish his wishes. If He really had pleasure that the wicked should die, and not live; what could be more easy to Him, than to cut them off in their wickedness? In that case we might expect to see punishment quickly overtaking the offender, and judgement exercised without mercy. But do we see these things? Do we see Sinners speedily and suddenly cut off in the midst of their sins, in the very act of wickedness? Occasionally, indeed, such a display of God's aweful justice takes place. But how rarely does an instance of this kind

* Ezek. xxiii. 23.—2 Peter, iii. 9.

occur! God's usual method is to exercise patience, long-suffering, and forbearance towards Sinners; to be slow to anger, and backward in punishing. Instead of plunging the Wicked at once into Hell, he often grants to them a long reprieve, and defers the execution of the sentence for even many years. Cannot we call to mind some instances, in which God has thus borne long with sinners, and has spared them for a season when he might justly have destroyed them? What has been the case with ourselves? Has not the Lord been long-suffering towards *us?* Has He not spared *us* when we deserved punishment, and in his wrath has thought upon Mercy? And now *why* is all this? Why is He thus patient towards sinners, and backward in punishing them? It is, that they may have time for repentance, and space to renounce their sin, and return to their duty. It is, that they may improve the season of his long-suffering, and make their peace with him and live. How clearly, then, do the Lord's dealings with sinners, prove his patience and long-suffering towards them! How strikingly does his conduct illustrate the meaning of his Word, and show that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked!

There is yet, however, a still clearer and more striking illustration of the same truth.

If God desired the death of Sinners, why did He plan, provide, and publish a way of life for them? By Sin they had brought themselves under the condemnation of eternal death. Had the Lord wished them to continue in that state, He had nothing to do but to leave them to themselves, and to the consequence of their sins. They had *destroyed*, but could not *recover* themselves. God alone could make a way for their escape. He alone could do any thing to save them from dying eternally, and could open to them the Kingdom of Heaven. To return, then, to our former reasoning; *Why* did He make a way for their escape? *Why* did he do any thing to save them from dying eternally? *Why* did he open to them the Kingdom of Heaven; if at the same time He wished their destruction, and had pleasure in casting them into Hell? His conduct, in this respect, shows that he wishes not their destruction, and has no pleasure in their death. — But let us go farther; let us see *what* was the way which he provided for their recovery; *what* it was that He did, in order to save them from eternal death. He gave his Son for them, his only begotten, his dearly beloved Son. He gave *Him* as a ransom for sinners; gave *Him* up as a sacrifice for their sins; gave *Him* up to death,

even the death of the cross; that by His stripes they might be healed; that by His sufferings they might be saved. This does not look as if He had pleasure in the death of the wicked. This does not look as if He delighted in punishment, and was willing that sinners should perish. On the contrary, it proves, in the strongest manner, that the very reverse was the case. It shows, beyond all doubt, that the Lord delighteth in the salvation of sinners, seeing He hath not withheld from them his Son, his only Son, as the price of their salvation; but was pleased even to bruise this Son, and to lay on Him the iniquities of us all, rather than that we should bear our own iniquities, and perish under a righteous condemnation. —— Far, then, for ever, be the thought, that God hath pleasure in the death of the wicked! His own most solemn declarations, the universal tenour of Scripture, his actual dealings with mankind, and his stupendous gift of a Saviour, that unspeakable expression of his Love and Mercy; all join in proclaiming that the Lord is merciful and gracious, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. —— We proceed, then, to the Second Truth which I proposed to explain and illustrate, namely,

II. That if the Wicked do not turn from their evil ways, they will surely die.

This Truth is not like the First, expressly *stated* in the text, but is clearly *implied* in it. When the Lord declares that He hath "no pleasure in the death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked should live," let us observe, that he doth not merely say *live*, but *turn from his ways and live*. He joins these things together. He speaks of turning from their ways, as a necessary step towards their living; and consequently *implies*, that without turning from their ways, they cannot live. Again, in that earnest and tender expostulation, which he immediately adds, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; why will ye die?" the same truth is still more distinctly taught: for no one surely can hear these words without understanding them to mean, that if the wicked do not turn from their evil ways they will certainly die.

But what is the turning from our evil ways, which is here signified? It is not shedding a few tears of sorrow and remorse. It is not forming a few serious resolutions. It is not leaving off a few bad practices. It is not attending to religious duties more constantly, or more strictly, than formerly. By the expression, *turning from our evil ways*,

is meant a deep and total change of the heart and life; a conversion of the whole soul; a turning from sin to God in the inner man. The person who is turned from his evil ways is "a new creature;" he has a new heart and a new spirit. "Old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." He has new desires and dispositions, and these lead him to walk in newness of life: so that henceforth, having "laid aside every weight, and especially the sin which most easily besets him;" hating and forsaking every false way, and having respect unto all God's commandments, he proves, in a way which cannot be mistaken, that he has indeed turned out of "the broad road of destruction" into "the narrow way that leadeth unto life." Such is the great thorough, spiritual change which is here signified. Nothing short of such a change as this will at all come up to the full scriptural meaning of the expression in the text; and without being thus turned from our evil ways, we shall surely die.

This truth, like the one before considered, is supported by abundant testimony; and the only difficulty lies in choosing the plainest proofs. We have, in the first place, the most positive declarations of Scripture:— "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish."

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

"The wicked," that is, the impenitent and unconverted, "are reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." "He that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour." "They shall go away into everlasting punishment." "The Lord shall rain upon them snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." "They shall not escape," but "shall be turned into hell:" "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."*

To these aweful declarations, we may in the next place add, the Lord's actual dealings with men. His conduct towards them illustrates this truth, no less clearly than the former; for though he be long-suffering towards sinners, yet his patience will not last for ever. He waiteth that he may be gracious; but if men despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance: if, because sen-

* Luke, xiii. 3.—John, iii. 3.—Matt. xviii. 3.—Job, xxi. 30.—Isaiah, xxvii. 2.—Matt. xxv. 46.—Psalm xi. 6.—ix. 17.—Mark, ix. 44.

tence against their evil works be not executed speedily, therefore their hearts are the more fully set in them to do evil; if, in short, they are not led by the Lord's goodness to repentance, the certain consequence will be, that judgement will at length overtake them, and at a time when they are not aware. How many instances of this deferred, but righteous vengeance, do we find in Scripture! God bore long with the sinners before the flood. He granted them a reprieve for one hundred and twenty years; but when they repented not, at the appointed time, He fulfilled his threatenings, and drowned the world. He bore long with Pharaoh and the Egyptians; but at length their impenitence wearied out his mercy, and He overthrew them all in the Red Sea. He bore long with his people Israel in the wilderness; and notwithstanding their disobedience and rebellion, suffered not his whole displeasure to arise: but at last, in the day of provocation, He sware that they should never enter into his rest. These things, which happened unto them for examples, and are written for our admonition, strikingly illustrate the truth before us. And how many illustrations of the same truth do we continually see! How frequently do we see judgements overtaking the wicked in this world! How

frequently does " the Lord come forth out of his place," his mercy-seat, " to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity!" By all which displays of his aweful justice, He significantly teaches us, that a day of wrath will finally come, " a day of the revelation of his righteous judgement," when those who " have set at nought all his counsel, and would have none of his reproof," " shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

But farther; the very way in which God has manifested his richest mercy towards sinners, proves beyond all doubt the certainty of his judgements on the impenitent. For be it remembered, that to " bless us by turning every one of us from his iniquities," is as much a part of that salvation, which the Son of God came from Heaven to perfect, as to deliver us from the guilt of sin, and the pains of hell. " He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." * And though pardon of sin be undoubtedly represented as the first great blessing of the Gospel, yet conversion from sin is constantly set forth as the certain effect, the necessary fruit, the indispensable evidence of an interest

* Titus, ii. 14.

in this blessing. The faith which, by joining sinners to Christ, justifies their persons, will also sanctify their hearts; it will create in them a godly sorrow for sin, and cause them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. What then will become of the impenitent? By continuing such, they plainly show that they have no faith in Christ, and consequently no union with him, no interest in his promises, no share in his salvation. How then shall they escape? What chance, what probability, what possibility is there, that they shall go unpunished? The very blood of Jesus, which might plead effectually in their behalf, will cry aloud against them. The very mercy which they slight will more clearly expose the incorrigible hardness of their hearts, and will call for a tenfold vengeance on their heads. — Surely, then, it is as plain, that the wicked, who turn not from their evil ways, shall certainly die, as it is that the Lord has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they should turn and live. — Nor let us suppose that these truths at all contradict each other. There may be a *seeming*, but there is no *real* opposition between them. Let us remember, that "the Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." *

* Proverbs, xvi. 4.

He " will get him honour" upon all his creatures, and every one must do him glory. If sinners refuse to glorify his mercy by turning to Him, and receiving the gift of eternal life, though Jesus Christ, they must glorify his justice by suffering the punishment which his law denounces on their sins.

Behold, then, my brethren, the goodness and the severity of God. — His *goodness* towards those who turn to Him, through the Gospel of his Son. — His *severity* towards those who continue in their sins; and while you behold these things, recollect how deeply you are concerned in them. Have you been hitherto of the number of those who entertain hard thoughts of God? Have you looked on him as a severe and cruel master, whom it is difficult, if not impossible, to please: who takes pleasure in punishing, and is extreme to mark what is done amiss? O! lay aside such unreasonable thoughts, so dishonourable to God, so hurtful to yourselves. There is no foundation for them: for the Lord, as you have seen, delighteth in mercy. He is full of grace, goodness, and truth: and, far from wishing you to perish, is anxiously waiting for your repentance — or, on the other hand, are you of that still more numerous class, who presumptuously think that God will not punish sinners?

Do you dare foolishly to imagine that God has uttered threatenings which He never purposes to execute: that, whether you repent or not, you shall yet escape: that at the most, a little outward change at last, or a few tears shed on your death-bed, will be sufficient to save your souls? Have you such thoughts as these? Learn from the view here given of the justice and severity of God how vain they are; how worse than vain, how profane and impious! Then part with them for ever. Deeply fix it in your heart, as a truth which can never be denied, (may the Lord fix it there by his Spirit!) that without a real, an inward, an abiding change, you cannot possibly escape everlasting death.

What remains, my brethren, but that I earnestly and affectionately address you in the concluding words of the text: "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways: for why will you die?" When God is so willing to save your soul, why should you be willing to destroy it? When he offers you life, why should you choose death? When he calls you to share the happiness of Heaven, why should you prefer the miseries of hell? May the Lord dispose your hearts to repent, and believe the Gospel! May he turn you from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin!

SERMON VI.

THE PRESENT TIME THE MOST CONVENIENT FOR REPENTANCE.

Acts, xxiv. 25.

Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.

With these words, Felix, the Roman governor, stifled his convictions, and resisted the Holy Ghost. His conscience had not been proof against the faithful preaching of St. Paul. The word of God, "which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," had reached the sinner's heart. It had struck terror into his soul. Nor had he been able to hide his feelings. "As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, Felix trembled." His trembling, however, was but for a moment. He quickly got rid of his fears and recovered his spirits. He did not, indeed, reprove or threaten the Apostle

for his boldness; neither did he deny the truth of what had been said: but unable to bear the preacher, or his presence, he pleaded want of leisure; said that he had not time to listen any longer to his discourse; and promised on some more *suitable* occasion to give him another hearing. "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

It is probable that, in saying this, Felix might not say more than at the moment he really meant. It is probable that he intended to do what he said he would. But, alas! he knew neither the deceitfulness of his heart, nor the hardening nature of sin. He knew not that in putting off his convictions to some other time he was perhaps putting them off for ever. And this, in fact, was the case. For we do not find that the *convenient* season, of which he spake, ever came. On the contrary, he afterwards "sent for the Apostle often and communed with him:" yet we are expressly told, that it was only in the "hope that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him."

On hearing this account of the Roman governor, we may be ready to say, 'What 'a pity it was he acted thus. What a pity 'it was that he did not instantly yield

'to his convictions, forsake his sins, and 'become a Christian!" It was indeed a pitiable case. But it is not the only instance of a sinner thus deceiving himself, resisting his convictions, and putting off his repentance to what he thinks will be a more convenient season. It is to be feared that such things happen daily; that numbers are continually falling into this snare of the devil; that convinced in their hearts of the absolute necessity of being thoroughly religious, in order to being saved, they are yet striving against this conviction; and whenever it may press upon them with more than usual seriousness, are inwardly saying to it, as Felix said to the Apostle, "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

This is an error so common, and at the same time so dangerous; *one* so closely joined with our present comfort and eternal happiness, that I shall try particularly to expose it, and if possible to free us from its power. May God be with us by his Spirit, while I endeavour to point out and answer some of those false pleas on which persons put off their becoming religious to a more *convenient* season!

I. One of these pleas is *youth.* They are at present *too young* to be religious.

In the first place, then, let me address the young, and bespeak their very serious attention. I am supposing that they allow the *importance* of religion; that they feel convinced of the necessity of being religious; and that they seriously intend one day to become so. But the present season does not appear to them so *suitable* for this great purpose. They are of opinion, that some time hence a more *convenient* opportunity will come. 'Youth,' they cry, 'is the season 'of gaiety and thoughtlessness. At this 'time of life our spirits are naturally high, 'and our passions strong. Consequently, to 'become religious, while we are young, 'will be far more difficult than it will be 'when we are somewhat older. Time will 'weaken our appetites. Our passions will 'be worn out by a little indulgence. As 'we advance in years, we shall naturally 'grow more steady and serious, and dis-'posed to religion. As our reason becomes 'stronger, our evil propensities will, of 'course, become weaker. So that, in fact, 'the difficulties which now stand in our 'way will be almost entirely removed: and, 'therefore, we may be fully justified in put-'ting off our repentance till this conve-'nient season shall come.' Now, my young friends, I would readily believe that you

use this language in the sincerity of your hearts. I would give you full credit for thinking and meaning exactly what you say. I would not suppose that, in this matter, you have any intention to deceive. But are you not yourselves deceived? In the most solemn manner let me caution you against giving way to such delusive reasonings. In all this statement every single argument is false. Youth, so far from being an unfit time, is, of all times, the fittest for becoming religious. Though at that season the spirits be high and the passions strong, yet then, also, the heart is soft, the conscience is tender, the affections are warm. Then it is that the mind, like wax, is most ready to receive impressions, and most likely to keep them. We all know how much the future character in life depends on the impressions received in youth. You talk of the appetites being weakened by time! Alas! you know not what you say. If you wished to pluck up a tree by the roots, which would you select with the greatest hope of success, one which had been planted for a few months, or one which had grown many years? You know that time would fix the tree deeper in the ground, and would greatly increase the difficulty of plucking it up. Why then should you not suppose, that time will do the same

by your appetites, and will make the rooting of them out hereafter a far more difficult work than it would now be. Be assured that this will be the case. Years, instead of weakening, will only strengthen your appetites, and fix them deeper in your heart. You talk of your passions being worn out by indulgence. Here again you know not what you say. Would you abate the fury of a fire by putting on more fuel? Would you diminish the violence of a stream by letting into it a greater quantity of water? In both instances you would defeat your own purpose, and only increase what you thought to lessen. So it will be with your passions, if you hope to wear them out by indulgence. Indulgence will only increase their force. The more they have, the more they will require. And by the time at which you suppose that they will be most easily overcome, they will have got to such a head, that tenfold labour will be necessary to subdue them. It may be true, that when you are grown old, you may perhaps become more thoughtful and steady: but it is not true that you will become more disposed to religion, than you now are. On the contrary, you will, if possible, be less disposed to it. Your thoughtfulness and steadiness will reach only to

worldly things. Your youthful follies may be over, but your heart will be as far off from God as it is at present. Be not then deceived. That *more convenient season* of which you speak will never come. The present season is the most convenient. If you let it slip, you will never have such another. You will find it an *easier* work to become religious now, in the days of your youth, than you will do, when your conscience shall be hardened, and sin be made familiar to you. Would that you could be persuaded of this truth! Would that you could be prevailed on to set about this work in earnest! How much pain, and grief, and shame will you thus avoid! What reason will you have to bless the day, in which you truly turned to God! Be persuaded. Be prevailed on. Say not to the Spirit now pleading in your heart, "Go thy way for this time." Rather say, "Come, Lord Jesus," 'Enter into my soul. Take up thy 'abode there. Make me altogether thine. 'To-day, while it is called to-day, let not 'my heart be hardened through the deceit-'fulness of sin!'

II. Another plea, on which men put off their becoming religious to a more convenient season, is *business*. They are at present too busy to be religious. They hope to become-

religious at some future time: but this is not a convenient season for it. Their head and hands are now full of worldly cares. They are now occupied in providing for their wants, in maintaining their family, or in making a fortune. Day and night they are taken up with these things. What time then have they for religion? No season could possibly be so inconvenient for such a pursuit as the present. But in a few years things will be altered. Business will be growing less. Their wants will be fewer. Their family will be provided for. Their fortune will be made. They shall *then* have more leisure to attend to religion. They shall have less to do with the concerns of this world, and consequently more time for looking after the concerns of the next. For the present, then, they will put away their serious thoughts; and, when the convenient season comes, will call for them again.

This is their way of reasoning. And now my brethren, in stating this reasoning, have I not stated the very reason which some of you are using; by which you are silencing the voice of conscience, and justifying yourselves in a course of irreligion?

To such among you, let me next address myself; and would that I might convince you of the falsehood of your reasoning!

If the matter really be as I have here supposed you to state it: if you be so entirely taken up with worldly business, as *really* to have no time for the concerns of Religion; in this case, let me earnestly and solemnly charge you, as you value the favour of God and the salvation of your soul, to make your worldly business less. Whatever you may lose of the world, have less to do with the world. For you are most grossly deceiving yourselves, if you can suppose, that there is any worldly business of any kind which is a thousandth part of the consequence to you, as the care of your soul. This is your *great* business: and if you *really* have not time to attend to this business, and to your worldly business too, there cannot be a moment's doubt *which* you should give up. "One thing is needful."

But, my brethren, I can hardly believe that this is *really* the case. I can hardly believe, that *any* of you are so taken up with worldly business, as not *really* to have time for religious concerns. Remember, that religion is not intended for those only, who have nothing or little to do. It is intended for all men; and, consequently, for those who are actively engaged in the business of life. Religion is not a work to be done at some spare time or leisure hour, when we

are free from worldly business. Far otherwise. It is to be the work of all our time, of every hour, and to enter into *all* our worldly business. The truly religious man is one, who does not neglect his worldly business, but who carries it on, upon religious principles, and with religious views. While he is "not slothful in business," he is also "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." To say then that you have not *time* to be religious, is, in truth, to talk absurdly. For while you have time to attend to the concerns of your profession or your trade; while you have time to plough, and time to sow; while you have time to sell, and time to buy; you must have time to be religious; since to be religious, is to do all these things with religion in your heart. What time then can be so convenient for being religious as the present? You think that at some future period, a more convenient time will come. But it is a sad mistake. Consider with yourselves, how long it is, since first you made the same excuse. You will find perhaps that ten, or fifteen years ago, you pleaded your worldly business as a reason for neglecting religion. You still plead the same reason. The more convenient season is not yet come. Why should you suppose that ten or fifteen years hence, you will not

still urge the same excuse? Be assured it will be so. The more convenient season will never come. Though your family may be provided for, though your fortune may be made, yet you will still find your head and hands to be as full of business as they ever were. You will still find, that you are too busy to become religious. Habit will have become a second nature; and to turn to God, with all your heart, will be as *inconvenient* then, as it is now. Defer not then this necessary work any longer. You will never have a season more fitted for it than the present. May you "know in this your day the things which belong unto your peace, before they are hidden from your eyes!"

III. A third plea, on which men put off their becoming religious to a more *convenient* season, is *Health*. This, indeed, is a plea which they do not urge so *openly*, as the other two which have been noticed. But it is one which they as frequently *urge in their own hearts*, and on which they secretly act. When alarmed, as Felix was, by the faithful preaching of God's word; when convinced of the necessity of heartily turning to God in order to be saved; they are apt to say thus within themselves, 'True, we must 'turn to God, or perish. We know that 'if we die in an ungodly state, we shall be

'condemned. But what need is there of so 'much haste? We are at present in no 'danger of dying. As yet, we have health 'and strength. We may promise to our-'selves many years to come. Then let us 'take a little more pleasure, and enjoy our-'selves a little longer. Let us put off this 'work of Religion to a season more suited 'to it. A time of sickness will come. We 'shall then be prevented from following 'our worldly pursuits. We shall then 'have leisure for reflection. We shall have 'nothing else to do but to repent, and make 'our peace with God, and prepare for 'death. That will be a season of all others 'the best fitted for this work. Therefore 'to that season we will defer it.'—Of all the pleas which have been mentioned, this perhaps betrays the greatest enmity of the heart to God. But it is the *folly* of the plea, which I am particularly concerned to show: and would that I could show it in a manner sufficiently striking and impressive!

Suppose, my brethren, that you had some business of great moment to transact; some long and difficult account to settle; some work to do which required much thought, recollection, and resolution; would you choose for doing such a work, a time of

'sickness, or a season of health? Would you prefer transacting this great business at a time, when your body was stout and strong, and your mind sound and vigorous; or when both were enfeebled and distracted by pain and sickness? At such a time, should it be proposed to you to enter on such a work, you would surely say, 'I am 'not fit for this matter at present. I am 'too weak to attend to it now. A work 'of this kind is not suited to a sick man. 'How can you suppose, that in this low 'and painful condition, I can call forth '' and exert that attention and seriousness, 'which such a business demands?' This is what you would say; and would *justly* say, under such circumstances. But then let me ask you in return, How can you suppose that at such a time, and under such circumstances, you will be fit for the greatest, and the most difficult of all works, for making your peace with God, and for exerting all that thought, and recollection, and resolution, which such a work requires? Had you witnessed the scenes which your ministers sometimes witness, you would be sensible of the utter vanity of such a supposition: had you been called, as they have been, to the chambers of the sick, and the beds of the dying: had

you there seen, as they have seen, the arduous,, the almost impossible task of fixing any thing like a religious impression on the mind, when disease and decay have deadened the faculties, and perhaps impaired the senses: had you been forced, as they have been, to give the matter up in despair, and to come away from the sick man's house, under a full persuasion that he was become incapable of profiting by their prayers or counsels: You would then be deeply convinced, that the time of sickness is not a convenient time for *becoming* religious. You would then be deeply convinced, that to put off your repentance to such a seasons is deliberately to imitate the conduct of the foolish virgins; to defer the going in search of oil, till the bridegroom shall be coming, and the door be shut. God grant that you may be deeply convinced of this truth; and not put off *your* repentance "till the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them!"

But in addition to all which has been said, there is one thing more to be stated: one thing, which of itself is an answer to all the pleas that have been mentioned, and to every plea which can be mentioned, for putting off your repentance to a more con-

venient season. It is this. The present season is the only season of which you are *sure*. Could it then be proved that your pleas were well founded, yet how would they justify you in continuing to live irreligiously? Could it even be proved that the time of youth, or of business, or of health, were not so *convenient* a season for repentance, as the time which you fancy to yourself; yet how do you know, but that this less convenient season, as you judge it, may be the only season given to you? Many are cut off in the midst of youth, of business, of health. Why may not this be your case? Have you any security that it will not? In the midst of life we are in death. Your breath hangs by a thread, which the next moment may be cut asunder. Talk not, then, of more convenient seasons. There is none convenient but the present. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation!" Put not off to another day, to another hour, the great work of saving your soul: lest another day, another hour, may never be given you for doing it. "To-day harden not your heart." Redeem the time. "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord,

when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him *immediately*. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." *

* Luke, xii. 35, 36, 37.

SERMON VII.

DESCRIPTION AND DANGER OF CONVICTION WHEN NOT FOLLOWED BY CONVERSION.

LUKE, xi. 24, 25, 26.

When the Unclean Spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house, whence I came out; and when he cometh he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other Spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

CONVERSION is that great change from a natural to a spiritual state, without which no man can be saved. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Let us not, however, mistake the nature of this change. Let us not suppose that every sudden resolution of

amendment, every occasional breaking off from evil practices, every slight reformation of the outward conduct, is to be honoured with the title of Conversion. True Conversion is a *Change of Heart;* a deep, an abiding change of the *whole* heart, wrought by divine grace. It is a turning from sin to GOD in the inner man; 'a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;' a new creation of the heart unto holiness, proving itself to be real, by bringing forth the habitual fruits of righteousness. This, in the language and meaning of Scripture, is true Conversion; and every pretension to this change, which is not thus distinguished, is counterfeit and vain. A man, under the weight of present convictions, may make many resolutions of amendment, and even in some respects may reform his life: but unless he be renewed in the inner man; unless his heart be changed, and become an habitation of GOD through the Spirit; the certain consequence will be, that so soon as his present convictions shall have lost their force, he will return to his evil courses, and thus sink into a state far more dangerous than even that in which he formerly was.——Such precisely is the case which our LORD describes in the text. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh

through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out: and when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

It is the aweful and melancholy case here described which I now purpose to consider. God grant, that the consideration of it may be profitable to our souls! There are several particulars in the Description, which shall be noticed in order.

I. The first is the state of a man, when the unclean spirit is gone out of him. All unconverted men are spiritually the Slaves of Satan. He leads them captive at his will. He lives, he works, he rules in them; and like a "strong man armed, keeps his palace and his goods in peace." He is represented, however, as occasionally quitting his hold; as departing for a short time from the soul, and losing his power over the heart. "He goeth out of the man." In other words, the sinner is stopped in his sinful course by a conviction of its danger. Conscience is alarmed: and none of those arts, by which Satan has hitherto silenced its voice, will at

present avail. He no longer keeps his goods *in peace.* Such a disturbance is raised in the soul; such a discovery is made of his tyranny and designs, that he is forced for a season to retire.—But let us take a closer view of what is here meant. Let us suppose to ourselves a man living in a state of careless security about his soul, walking after the lusts of the flesh, and wholly given up to the world and to the things of the world. The present life, with its wants and cares, its pleasures and amusements, takes up all his time and thoughts. As for Religion, though he may not formally renounce it; yet heaven and hell are things which clearly have no real influence on his conduct. He lives "without GOD in the world;" and is no more troubled about Eternity and all its aweful consequences, than if he were like a beast that perishes.

Let us suppose to ourselves a man of this description, (how many are there to whom the description will apply?) and then let us farther suppose him suddenly awakened to reflection. An alarming Sermon, or an affecting Providence; the Death of some of his companions, or the Preservation of his own life from some imminent danger, has touched his conscience. Perhaps disease, the natural fruit of some of his evil practices, has seized upon his body, and brought death

before his eyes. He seems to stand on the brink of the grave; and begins to see many things as he never saw them before. He looks back on his mis-spent life with bitter self-reproach. He looks forward with dreadful apprehension. The vanity of the world now strikes him with full force: for it can neither furnish relief to his body nor consolation to his mind. The folly of his choice, in having preferred this life to the next, appears in its most glaring colours, and draws forth heartfelt lamentations. The occasions, the places, the companions of his Sins, pass before his mind in sad review; while the tremendous punishments, that await him, present themselves in their most frightful images. Alarmed, dismayed, confounded, he vows and prays. He sends, perhaps, for the minister of the Gospel: hears the glad tidings of Salvation; resolves to sin no more; and, in his own idea, for ever renounces every evil practice. See here the state described in this part of the text. Behold the man *when the unclean Spirit is gone out of him*— But is he then converted? The next particular in the description will show us that he is not.

II. "When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places,

seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out: *and when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.*" — The Devil, having unwillingly quitted his hold in the Sinner's heart, is impatient to return; and through his restless love of wickedness, can find no peace till he has recovered the power which he has lost. Accordingly he comes back to his palace; examines its state; and finds it as suitably prepared and furnished for his reception as it ever was. The fact is, no work of grace has really taken place in the heart. The man has been terrified, but not converted. His nature remains the same. No change has taken place within. There pride and the love of sin still continue in their full strength, and fit him, as much as ever, for being the palace and residence of Satan. This may be shown in two particular instances.

1. Amidst all his convictions he has had no sense of the *Evil* of Sin. He has bitterly lamented the consequences of sin, so far as they affect himself, by bringing on him misery and destruction: but he has never lamented it as having been committed against a good and holy God. He has never seen it in its true colours, nor hated it for its evil nature. It constantly follows, whenever the

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love and power of sin are broken in the heart, that a man hates and bewails sin for its own sake. But this has not been the case with the person of whom we are speaking. He has bewailed indeed the *punishment* of sin: but he has never truly owned the *justice* of that punishment. He has felt his *misery;* but he has never heartily confessed his *guilt.* He has seen that he *must* suffer, and has trembled; but he has never been deeply convinced that he *deserves* to suffer. On the contrary, he has ever, to a certain degree, stood out on his defence before God. Instead of casting himself wholly on the divine mercy, with deep and penitent confessions of his unworthiness, and charging upon himself without reserve the entire guilt and shame of all his numerous transgressions, he has constantly thrown the fault on something else. He has ascribed his miscarriages to the want of better instruction, or to the seduction of bad examples; to the strength of his passions, or to the peculiarity of his situation. Thus has he framed some excuse for himself; and has clearly betrayed the proud and unhumbled state of his heart.

2. He has given a farther proof, that this is still the state of his heart, by the reliance which he has placed *on his own strength and goodness.* The truly converted soul always

feels its own weakness and corruption, gives up all self-dependance, and trusts solely to the promised assistance of divine grace. But the person whom we are describing has felt nothing of this kind, nor done any of these things. He has *resolved*, indeed, to forsake all sin; but he has made this resolution, trusting entirely to *his own strength*. He has had no *fear* of his own heart, nor any notion of its utter depravity. He has not suspected its deceitful nature, nor looked upon it as the impure fountain from whence all the polluted streams of his life have flowed. Consequently he has never earnestly sought for divine assistance and a new heart. He has cried for *pardon*, but he has never really prayed for *grace*. Confident of his own sufficiency, he has never humbly applied to Christ for his Holy Spirit to support and sanctify him. Can he then be said to be really converted? It is plain that his heart remains unchanged; the same impure habitation, which it has always been; a stranger to Christ, who alone could cleanse it, and still "swept and garnished," as before, for the reception and service of the devil. Such, on his return, the unclean spirit finds it. And this leads us to the next particular mentioned in the text.

III. "Then taketh he unto him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there." These words describe the sinner's awful relapse under the power of Satan. The steps, by which he returns to his wretched slavery, are plain and easy to be traced. As his convictions had arisen only from fear; so when the causes of his fear are removed, his convictions gradually die away. He recovers, it may be, from the disease which threatened to destroy him: and death, being thus placed at a greater distance, begins to lose much of its terror. No longer standing, as he supposed, on the brink of the grave, he no longer trembles at what is beyond it. As health returns, former propensities return. Long-indulged habits call loudly for their usual gratifications. Unmortified lusts revive, and renew their strength. Old companions in sin allure. Prayer is less frequently and less earnestly used. The remonstrances of conscience are less carefully observed. One resolution is broken after another: till, at length, the whole man again enlists himself in the service of Satan. The devil "takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; enters in, and dwells there." He now takes entire possession of the man, and plunges him into still

deeper wickedness. The wretched apostate, set free from the temporary restraints of conscience, and the terrifying fear of death, returns with keener relish to his guilty pleasures, runs greater lengths in sin, and "follows all uncleanness with greediness." —Throwing aside shame, as well as fear, he sinks, perhaps, into a hardened infidel, a profane scoffer at serious godliness, and a determined corrupter of others: or, what is equally ruinous, turns the Grace of God into licentiousness; becomes a wicked professor of the Gospel; preserves the form of godliness, but denies the power of it; and, holding the truth in unrighteousness, follows the doctrine of those, who "sin on, that grace may abound;" "whose damnation is just." We now come to the fourth particular described.

IV. "The last state of that man is worse than the first." It is worse in three respects.

1. His guilt is greater.

He has now more to answer for, than he before had. He does not now sin in ignorance, as, perhaps, he once did: which, though it might not altogether do away his guilt, would yet, in some degree, make it less. He has seen his danger: he has heard his duty, he has been taught the way of

salvation. He is now sinning against light, and knowledge, and conviction. He has deliberately plunged into wickedness with his eyes open. Having once escaped "the pollutions of the world," he is again, willingly and knowingly, "entangled therein, and overcome." Nay, farther, he is acting thus in direct opposition to his own most solemn resolutions and vows: to those earnest protestations of amendment which he poured forth in the day of his distress. How repeatedly did he promise, if God would prolong his life, that he would no more turn to his idols! How earnestly did he pray for pardon, on the express condition that he would sin no more! His load of guilt is enlarged a thousand fold, and threatens to sink him down with intolerable weight into everlasting ruin.

2. His misery will be greater.

This consequence must naturally follow. They whose guilt is greater, will justly receive a greater damnation. "It had been better for them (says St. Peter of such characters) not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." * And St. Jude declares of such, that to them is "reserved the

* 2 Pet. ii. 21.

blackness of darkness for ever." * Indeed, in the very nature of things, the man's misery must now be greater than it would otherwise have been; for the very thought of having been once on the way to heaven, must greatly increase his wretchedness at finally losing it, and must give additional anguish to the gnawing of that worm which never dieth.

3. His danger is greater.

He *may* still be converted and find mercy. By turning to God in true faith and repentance, he *may* even yet be delivered from guilt and misery. But conversion is now *less likely* to take place, than it formerly was. We are told in the Hebrews, that, "if those who have once been enlightened fall away, it is *impossible* to renew them again unto repentance." † Their renewal, indeed, is not actually impossible, for with God all things are possible; but it is *highly improbable*. Repentance is the gift of Christ, and it is less likely that he will bestow it on such as have so wickedly abused his long-suffering towards them, and have thus wilfully broken their most solemn engagements with Him. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit; and can it be reasonably supposed that He will vouchsafe his grace to those who have so

* Jude 13. † Heb. vi. 4, 5.

daringly resisted and provoked him? If they be now saved, it must indeed be by a miracle of mercy. If they are now snatched from destruction, it must indeed be like as a brand plucked out of the fire. Far more probable is it, according to God's usual dealings with mankind, that they will now be left to themselves, to be hardened in their iniquity, to fill up the measure of their sins, and thus "to eat of the fruit of their own way, and to be filled with their own devices."

Such are the several particulars contained in this most aweful description. The grand lesson which we learn from it is, to beware of *trifling with convictions.* Convictions of our sin and danger, are the means which God employs for "bringing us out of darkness into his marvellous light." But there are two ways, in which we may make these means of no effect; by resisting them, or by resting in them. — To *resist* convictions is at once to put a stop to God's merciful dealings with our soul. To *rest in them* is to defeat his gracious purpose in another, but not a less certain way.

Are any of you then under conviction of sin? Do you see something of your guilt and misery as sinners? Has the Word of God touched your consciences and excited your fears? Has it led you to feel some doubts

and misgivings concerning the safety of your soul? Let me exhort, let me charge, let me beseech you, as you value your everlasting peace, *resist* not the Grace of God, which is thus striving with you. It may be the first dawn of that light in your soul, which, if suffered to increase, will never be put out. It may be the first spark of that heavenly fire, which, if not at present smothered, will burn for ever. Quench not the spirit. Though the thought that *you are a Sinner* be a painful, a humiliating thought, yet drive it not away. Listen to it as the voice of Christ speaking to your heart. Receive it as the merciful suggestion of the Almighty for the salvation of your soul. Encourage it by meditation and retirement. Above all, pray earnestly to God, that you may not be guilty of "doing despite unto the Spirit of his grace;" and that he may not have reason to say of you, "I called, but ye refused: I stretched out my hands, but ye would not regard."

On the other hand, while you resist not Conviction, beware of *resting in it*. You will not be saved by a *conviction* of your sins. but by a *conversion* from them. Mistake not one of these things for the other. Many perish through this mistake. Think not, because you have felt some alarm for your

soul, that therefore all is well. Think not, because you have been troubled with a recollection of your sins, that therefore the power of sin is broken in your heart. These are very different things. Conviction of sin is indeed a probable step to conversion: but it is *only* a step: a step which, if you advance no farther, instead of saving your soul, will plunge it deeper in guilt and misery. *Rest* not then in your convictions. Stop not here, but go on in the blessed path. Pray earnestly to God, that he will be pleased to perfect unto the end, the good work which he has begun in you: that you may sorrow for your sins with a godly sorrow: that you may be not only convinced, but converted: that your proud spirit may be humbled, and your corrupt nature purified: that "Christ may dwell in your heart by faith:" that He may reign and rule there; and "all your members be yielded as instruments of righteousness unto God."

And here I might finish the discourse, did not compassion require that a word should still be said to those unhappy persons whose state I have been describing. But how shall I address them? My brethren, your case indeed is sad: but is it utterly lost, utterly beyond all hope and remedy? God forbid that I should thus seal you to destruction!

Low as you are sunk beneath the common depths of wickedness, there is yet power with the Almighty to raise you up. In Christ are riches unsearchable, and mercies boundless. He has "gifts even for the rebellious." His compassions fail not. His arms are always open to receive the returning prodigal. "Turn then to this strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." Break the chain with which you are bound, and return unto the Lord. Cast yourselves on his mercy. Pray to him, "if peradventure he will give you repentance unto the acknowledgement of the truth." Plead with him to fulfil his gracious promise of taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh. Add not to your already enormous sins, by any longer delay, "lest he swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest." "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." "Seek the Lord while he may be found: call upon him while he is near." May he heal your backslidings! May he receive you graciously! May his anger be turned away!

SERMON VIII.

THE BROKEN HEART AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE.

PSALM li. 17.

The Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God! Thou wilt not despise.

THIS passage of Scripture is one of the sentences which our Church has appointed to be occasionally used at the beginning of her daily service. Nor could any passage of Scripture have been more suitably chosen for the purpose; for while it points out to us the frame and disposition of soul, which we should bring with us to the House of God; it encourages the humble worshipper to draw near with a confident expectation of being favourably received. In fact, David here describes that state of heart, which is all in all in religion; without which no religious profession can avail, no performance of religious duties can be ac-

cepted. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God! Thou wilt not despise." Let us consider,

I. The *State* of Heart here described.
II. The *Favour* with which God regards it.

I. The State of Heart here spoken of is described by the expressions of "a *broken* spirit, a *broken* and a *contrite* heart." A broken heart is a phrase in common use among us. We sometimes talk of a man being *broken-hearted;* and what we generally mean by this expression is, that he is utterly weighed down and overcome by grief or fear. His spirits sink under the burden. Unable any longer to contend, he yields to his difficulties, and gives up all hope. Such, however, is not exactly the meaning of this expression, as it is used in the text. By a *broken heart* is here meant, a heart convinced, and humbled indeed, under a sense of sin; but not in despair. It describes a state of heart directly the reverse of what is the natural state. Naturally the heart is proud, unconscious of its guilt, stout in defending itself, and boasting of its own merit and goodness. But the broken heart is humble, thoroughly convinced of its sin, and unreservedly condemning itself on account of it.

The Scriptures sometimes compare these two different states of the heart, to a heart of stone and a heart of flesh. The natural heart is a heart of stone. It is cold and hard, and resists all impressions. It is moved neither by the promises, nor by the threatenings of Scripture. But the *broken* heart is a heart of flesh. It is warm, tender, and, like wax, readily receives and keeps the image stamped on it. It reveres the truths of God, and "trembles at his word." — It was said, that the broken heart, though humbled under a sense of sin, is not in despair. This is to be noted. A state of despair can never be pleasing to God. Nor is such the state here described. When the heart is broken, it despairs indeed of establishing its own righteousness. Once it hoped to justify itself before God, and to stand on its own merits. But now all such hopes are gone for ever. It has seen too clearly, and felt too deeply, its own unworthiness, to have a thought of this kind. *Here* it despairs. It despairs of saving itself; but it does not despair of being saved by God's mercy in Jesus Christ. To *this* it looks with hope; perhaps with a trembling hope, but still with hope. On this alone it depends for acceptance with God, and gives up every other plea but this.

But farther, the Heart, here spoken of, is described as being not only *broken* but *contrite.* "A *broken* and a *contrite* heart." Now as the expression of a *broken heart* signifies its being *deeply convinced of sin;* so that of a *contrite* heart denotes its being *truly penitent for it.* Contrition is that "*godly sorrow* for sin," of which the Scriptures speak. There is a sorrow for sin, which does not answer this description. A man may be very sorry for his sin, when he finds that he is to suffer for it. A sight of the good which he has lost, or of the evil which he has brought on himself, may affect him with the most lively grief. Thus Esau bitterly lamented that he had despised his birth-right; when he found, that in consequence he had forfeited the blessing. Thus many criminals grieve for their offence, when it has brought them to prison and to death. But this is not "*godly* sorrow." This is not *Contrition.* To "sorrow after a *godly* manner," is to lament the *evil* of sin; to feel *shame* and *compunction* at the thoughts of our guilt and baseness. It is to grieve for our sins as having been committed against a good and holy God, who has been daily loading us with benefits and mercies. "Godly sorrow" has always an eye to *God.* It looks upon sin as an act of Rebellion against *God;*

as an attack made on *God;* as an *affront* done to God; as ingratitude shown to *God;* especially as he is "God in Christ reconciling us to Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us." It is this way of looking on sin, that wounds and grieves the soul, and excites in it true *Contrition.* "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." *

The contrite heart, then, is a heart which is deeply touched with a sense of God's goodness, and of its own vileness; which abhors and loathes itself; which cannot find words or actions to express its detestation of its own enormity; which, while it may hope to be forgiven of God, cannot forgive itself. —— Such is the state of heart described in the text. To obtain still clearer notions on the subject, we may refer to some of those instances, which the Scriptures furnish, of this broken spirit, this contrite heart. David, indeed, in his own example, gives a very exact representation of that state of heart which he is describing. If we read over his fifty-first Psalm, we shall see throughout the breathing of a soul humbled under a deep sense of sin, bitterly mourning on account of it, taking to itself the whole shame and guilt, and pleading only for grace and mercy.

* Zechariah, xii. 10.

We have another instance of the same abased and penitent state of heart in the thirty-first chapter of the prophet Jeremiah; where Ephraim is described as bemoaning himself thus: "Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned: for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Take another instance from the description given of the Publican, who "standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful unto me a sinner." Look again at the Prodigal Son. Judge what was the state of his heart, when he had determined to return home, and in these words to express the penitent feelings of his soul: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son: Make me as one of thy hired servants." To mention only one other example. Let us notice the account of "the Woman, which was a Sinner: who when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him

weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment." * In all these instances we see the effects of a broken and a contrite heart: how it works; how it shows itself; what it leads persons to do and to say: and hence we may more clearly and distinctly perceive what it is: what is that state of heart spoken of in the text. I proceed to show,

II. The Favour with which God regards it.

David calls this broken spirit, this contrite heart, "*the Sacrifices of God.*" In reading the Psalms of David, we must bear in mind, that though his Religion was in fact the same as ours, yet he would naturally describe it in language suited to the way in which it was then revealed. Thus it is, that he here speaks of the broken and the contrite heart, as being a *Sacrifice of God.* He was accustomed to the use of Sacrifices; and he employed this word on the present occasion, because it most naturally to him expressed the idea which he wished to convey. Let us see what this idea was. The first and chief end of the sacrifices, as appointed by God, was to teach the Jews the great doctrine of an atonement; or that "without shedding

* Luke, xviii. 13. — xv. 18, 19. — vii. 37, 38.

of blood is no remission."* The innocent animals being slain and burnt on the altar, showed the necessity of some Sacrifice being offered up to divine Justice in the place, and on the behalf, of Sinners. The first idea, then, which the word sacrifices would express, is that of an *Atonement for Sin.* This, however, is not the idea which David here meant to convey. He never meant to say that a broken and a contrite heart is an *atonement for sin.* He knew, as fully as we know now, that there is no real atonement for sin, but the blood of that *one great Sacrifice* which, in due time, was to be offered up on the Cross for the sin of the world, and which all the Jewish Sacrifices represented, and shadowed forth. He knew, as fully as we know now, that humiliation for sin, however deep, and contrition, however sincere, could make no satisfaction to the divine Justice. In this sense, then, he did not speak of them as a Sacrifice. But there is another sense in which the broken and contrite heart might be called a Sacrifice. While the Sacrifices in part were typical atonements for sin, they were also acts of worship, expressive of the mind of the worshipper. They implied on his part an acknowledgement of guilt, faith in the promised Saviour, and

* Hebrews, ix. 22.

devotedness to GOD. Many of them also were free-will offerings, which showed the pious feelings of such as brought them. In themselves, indeed, they were of no real value; they did GOD no service: but yet as coming from a willing mind, and sanctified by the blood of the Altar, they were graciously accepted by Him. And here then we see what is meant by *Sacrifice* in the text. The broken and the contrite heart, though in itself worthless and unserviceable, yet when presented in faith, and sanctified by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, is a sacrifice pleasing to GOD. It is *all* that the Sinner has to offer; and when *thus* offered, it will be favourably received. GOD "will *not despise it*," says David in the text. There is great force in this expression. It means far more than at first sight it seems to do. "A *broken* and a *contrite* heart, O God! *Thou* wilt not despise:" *Others* may despise it, but *God* will not.

The poor broken-hearted sinner often despises himself. He looks upon himself as worthless and despicable before GOD. He is so sunk in his own esteem, that he considers his heart as an offering utterly beneath GOD's notice, and deserving only of his abhorrence. But GOD does not so regard it. He values it highly. It is a sight which he

delights to see. He beholds nothing in this world which gives him so much pleasure as a broken and a contrite heart. Hear his own words to this effect: "Thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I *dwell* in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit:" and again, "To this man will I *look*, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." * Such a man indeed is often despised by his fellow-creatures. They mistake his character, and regard him with contempt. But God's "thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways." The proud, self-righteous Pharisee despised the broken-hearted Publican. Even in his acts of devotion, he could not abstain from speaking of him with contempt; "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, or even as this Publican." But God did not approve of these words. He did not despise the Publican. It is expressly said, "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other." Thus, in like manner, Simon the Pharisee despised the weeping penitent who came into his house, and condemned the expressions of her godly

* Isaiah, lvii. 15. —lxii. 2.

sorrow. But Jesus did not despise her. He did not contemn her anxiety and tears. He graciously testified his acceptance of her services. He showed that her broken and contrite heart was a Sacrifice not displeasing to Him. He said to her in the presence of all the guests, "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

What consolation, what encouragement, does this view of the subject afford, to every one whose state of heart answers to that described in the text: to every contrite, broken-hearted Sinner! Poor, and afflicted Soul! Thou writest bitter things against thyself. Thou labourest, and art heavy laden. Thou art weighed down under a sense of thy guilt and corruption. A sight of thy sins has greatly affected thee. Once, thou didst not believe that thou wast so evil. But now thine eyes are opened. Thou seest thine iniquities, and lookest upon them with shame and sorrow. Once thou stoodest high in thine own conceit. Thou thoughtest (presumptuous thought!) that thou hadst some worthiness before God. But now thy thoughts are changed. Thou art fallen, deeply fallen, in thy own estimation. Instead of being worthy before God, thou feelest that thou art worthless in his sight.

Thou abhorrest the very mention, the very thought of worthiness. The lamentation of the Prophet, the confession of Job, seems to suit thee best. "Woe is me; for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips." "Behold I am vile. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."* — But amidst all thy humiliation and self-abasement, know to thy comfort, that God doth not despise thee. Thou condemnest thyself, but God does not condemn thee. Nay, far from despising thee, He accounts thee precious. The lower thou art sunk in thy own esteem, the higher thou art risen in His. When thou thoughtest thyself to be something, thou wast abhorred of him. But now, that thou lookest upon thyself as a "very worm and no man," He regards thee with favour and delight. Far from condemning thee, He acquits thee of every charge. Now that thou condemnest thyself, He justifies thee freely. He says to thee, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." He stops thy self-reproaches, as the compassionate Father stopped those of his returning Son. He welcomes thee home. He "rejoices over thee with joy;" for thou "wast lost, but art found; thou wast dead, but art

* Isaiah, vi. 5. — Job, xl. 4. — xlii. 6.

alive again." Let not these rich comforts be offered thee in vain. May the Lord enable thee to apply them! Look to Jesus thy Saviour for help and peace. He will not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." Go to him for comfort; and he will not leave thee comfortless. He will bind up the broken heart, and will heal the wounded spirit. He will "give thee beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Thou hast not far to go to Him; for He is near, even at the door. He waiteth to be gracious. He knocks at thy heart for entrance. Refuse him not admission. Shut not out thy comforter, He comes to comfort and to save thee. He "is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

But, my brethren, while this passage gives such consolation to the penitent, what does it say to persons of a contrary character: to those whose hearts are proud; whose consciences are hard; who think highly of themselves, and despise the humble whom God approves; who dare to talk of their goodness; to excuse their sins; to say, that they have done little, or, perhaps, even no harm; who, far from trembling at God's word, regard not his threatenings; attend

not to his precepts, feel no compunction at the commission, or the recollection even of flagrant sins; and in the midst of irreligion and impenitence, promise to themselves peace, and say that they are in no danger? What, I ask, does the text say to such persons? It in fact says to them; "Behold, ye despisers, and tremble and perish." It speaks to them nothing but terror. It gives to them in their present state no hope. Nay, continuing as they are, it shuts them out from all hope. It reminds them that while God despiseth not the humble, He abhors the proud; that while the broken heart is an offering acceptable to Him, the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord. It reminds them, that while the tears and sighs, the self-condemnation, and penitent groanings of the contrite soul come up before *Him* as incense of a sweet-smelling savour; the unmeaning confessions, the heartless worship, the hypocritical prayers of the impenitent and unhumbled are in the highest degree offensive in his sight, and provoke his most righteous indignation. Be alarmed then for your safety, ye stout-hearted. Tremble at your aweful state. The Great, the Mighty God, who made you, who in a moment can destroy you, and can plunge both body and soul into Hell; He is *against*

you. He is your Enemy. May these words sink into your heart! May God by his Spirit work in you a better mind! "For how long will ye refuse to humble yourselves before him?" Humble yourselves, and He will lift you up.

SERMON IX.

DANGER OF INTEMPERANCE AND WORLDLY MINDEDNESS.

LUKE, xxi. 24.

Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares.

THE Scriptures leave untried no probable means of conveying instruction. They teach by precept and example. They reprove, threaten, and encourage; and employ every argument which may be likely to make an impression on the mind. At one time they cheer us by comfortable promises; at another, they put us on our guard by seasonable admonitions. It is this latter way which our Saviour used in the text: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares."

In discoursing on these words let us consider,

I. The danger mentioned.

II. The caution given concerning it.

I. The danger mentioned is this — "Lest that day come upon you unawares." — *What* day does our Saviour here mean? When speaking to the Jews, he probably meant, in the first place, *that* day when the Romans would destroy their city and nation. But in the full sense of the passage, we must understand him as speaking of *another* day; a day in which *we* are all deeply concerned, the Day of Judgement: *that* day, when "the dead, small and great, shall stand before God; and the books shall be opened; and the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works." * — It is not, however, necessary to confine this meaning even to this day. For since every man, when he goes out of the world enters on an eternal state of happiness or misery, to him the day of his death is, in fact, the same with the day of judgement. At the day of judgement indeed, his body having been raised, and joined again to his soul, his sentence will be publicly pronounced, and the complete execu-

* Rev. xx. 12.

tion of it will take place. But still at the day of his death, his character and state will be determined, and his happiness or misery will begin. No sooner was Lazarus dead, but he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man died, and was buried; but in the mean time he lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments. To both these persons, the day in which they died was *that* day spoken of in the text. And to all of us the same truth applies. To all of us, the day on which we shall die will be *that* day meant in the text. —— The danger is, "lest it should come upon us *unawares.*"

What are we to understand by this expression? When may this day be said to come on us *unawares?* —— It may be said to come on us *unawares,* when it comes at a time in which we are not looking for its coming; when it comes on us suddenly, and takes us by surprise. This statement, however, requires some explanation. The danger, mentioned in the text, does not arise merely from death coming suddenly. Many good men have *died suddenly:* perhaps at an hour, when they have not thought of dying, and were in no immediate expectation of death. But its coming even under such circumstances has not been dangerous to

them, because they have been in an *habitual* state of readiness for its coming. While the Bridegroom tarried, the wise virgins slumbered and slept. On this account they were to be blamed: but yet, when the cry was made that the Bridegroom was coming, they trimmed their lamps, and were taken to the feast. Notwithstanding their unseasonable slumber, they were habitually prepared for the Bridegroom's coming. They had oil in their vessels, as well as in their lamps. But it was not so with the foolish virgins. While they slumbered and slept, they had made no preparation for the coming of the Bridegroom. They had pretended to be waiting for him. They had taken their lamps: but they had no oil with them in their vessels. Therefore he indeed came *unawares* on *them*. He took them by surprise, when they had made no provision for his coming; and, consequently, being unprovided for it, and having now no means of making preparation, they were shut out from the marriage-feast.

From this way of explaining the subject it appears, that the expression of *that day coming upon us unawares*, intends not so much the *suddenness* of its coming, as the *state* in which on coming it shall find us. The danger mentioned, is not in our being

taken away at a *minute's warning*, but in our being removed hence in an *unprepared state*: not in our dying at a *moment* when we are not thinking of death; but in our dying at a time when we are wholly *unfit* for death. This is to die *unawares*. This is the *danger* spoken of in the text. — And, O my brethren, what danger have we so much reason to dread as this, to die in an *unprepared* state: to die at a time when we are *unfit* for death, to have that day thus come upon us unawares; how dreadful would it be! Think of the unspeakable disappointment, woe, and anguish, of being torn at once from all our joys and pleasures: of passing from this world of light and hope into a place of darkness and despair; of awakening from our sinful stupor, and finding ourselves in hell! Think of the inconceivable horror of being dragged before the throne of our holy and offended Maker, without having made any preparation for standing before him with acceptance; to be called into his presence, with all the burden of our unpardoned sins upon our heads, with our souls filthy and impure, full of evil passions and unholy tempers! To be commanded to account for our waste of gifts and talents, for our abuse of time and mercies, for our transgressions of the law, for our contempt of the Gospel;

for our neglect of Christ, for our despite done unto the Spirit of grace! Who can estimate the misery, the horror of such a moment? God forbid that we may ever feel it! May that day never come upon us unawares! May we escape the danger mentioned in the text! To this end let us consider,

II. The caution given, "Take heed to yourselves." Would we escape the danger, we must be on our guard against it. If that day should come upon us unawares, it will be our own fault; it will be through our own negligence in not preparing for its coming. We have sufficient notice of its approach. We have full warning to prepare for its arrival. We are plainly told what preparation is required, and how great is the danger of being unprepared. Have we not need, then, of circumspection and watchfulness? Does not our Saviour, with great reason, admonish us *to take heed* unto ourselves, lest that day come upon us unawares?

But besides the general admonition, he mentions two evils against which he would especially guard us, as tending in a peculiar manner to harden the heart, and to make us unfit for death; namely, the indulgence of sensual appetites, and an immoderate care

about worldly things: "Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and *so* that day come upon you unawares." To have our heart overcharged with these things, is to have it filled with them, and devoted to them; to be wholly taken up in enjoying or following them; and the necessary consequence of such a state must be a want of preparation for death. Can the man, whose heart is overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, be ready to die? If death find him sunk in these sensual pleasures, must it not come upon him unawares? "Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like," are expressly ranked among those works of the flesh, of which it is positively said, that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* Besides, Intemperance is a sin, which naturally unfits the heart for receiving serious truth, and makes it deaf to the voice of God. *Fleshly lusts* are those which above all others "war against the soul." They more particularly grieve and provoke the Holy Spirit of God; and therefore it is, that when the Apostle exhorts the Ephesians to be "filled with the Spirit," he at the same time admonishes them "not to be drunk with wine,

* Gal. v. 25.

wherein is excess." * Indeed, the judgement of God seems in a very remarkable manner to overtake the persons who indulge in such excesses. Experience proves, that of all the wretched slaves of Satan, the drunkard is the least frequently recovered out of his snare. There is more hope of every description of sinners, than of the man, who "rises up early in the morning that he may follow strong drink; who counteth it his pleasure to riot in the day-time; and continueth until night till wine inflame him." He often appears to be judicially hardened: and we must surely admit the justice of God, in leaving such a man to the consequences of his sin. He is labouring to destroy his reason, that noble gift of God to man; to extinguish in his soul that light, which the Almighty has put into it for the most valuable purposes; to bring himself down to a level with the brutes, nay, to a degree far below them, for they carry not their animal enjoyments to excess; and what wonder is it, if the Almighty should leave such a person to his wicked choice; should stupify his conscience; should blind his understanding, and suffer him to perish, as ignorant of God, and as thoughtless about his soul, as the brutes themselves? The heart of the drunken

* Ephes. v. 18.

Nabal "died within him, and he became as a stone."* And how many drunken Nabals are there in the world! How many, it is to be feared, who falling into the snare of the Devil, "have ears and hear not, have eyes and see not," who with a stupid unconcern mock at serious things; and suffer that day to come upon them unawares. O my brethren! take heed to yourselves, lest *your* hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness. "If sinners entice, consent ye not." Remember, death standeth at the door. Let it not come upon *you* unawares. "Be sober, and watch unto prayer."

An *immoderate care* about worldly objects is another evil, against which you are cautioned to guard. "Take heed unto yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with the *cares of this life*." It is not a proper and necessary attention to our worldly concerns, against which we are here warned. Such an attention is a part of our duty, which it would be criminal to neglect. It is an *immoderate care*, which is here meant. It is making the world our God. It is being so taken up with worldly business, as to bestow on it all our time, and thoughts, and talents. It is to be so engaged

* 1 Samuel, xxv. 37.

with providing for the present life, as to allow ourselves no leisure, or not enough leisure, for providing for the life to come. How many persons are thus *overcharged with the cares of this life!* "They rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness," as if they were born for no other purpose but to provide for their perishing bodies; as if to add field to field, and to join house to house, were the only things deserving their concern. But whilst thus given up to the world, are they in a state of preparation for death? Surely they are not. Such an immoderate desire after earthly things, is declared in the Scriptures to be Covetousness; and Covetousness is expressly called Idolatry; and Idolaters, it is no less expressly said, "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." * Indeed while men's hearts are thus *overcharged with the cares of this life*, death cannot but come upon them unawares, and find them wholly unfit for its approach. For this love of the world naturally shuts out the love of God from the heart: while at the same time it draws men into many sinful practices, and direct transgressions of the divine law. So true are the words of St. Paul to Timothy,

* Luke, xii. 15. — Col. iii. 5. — Rev. xxi. 8.

that "they who *will* be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."*

In application, then, of the subject before us, let me endeavour, my brethren, to enforce our Saviour's admonition upon you.

In the first place, let me exhort you to guard against that worldly-mindedness, that *immoderate* anxiety about worldly things, of which we have been speaking. It is a state of heart, to which you are naturally prone; and in defence of which you can urge many plausible reasons. On these accounts, the danger to be feared from it is the greater, and the necessity of a seasonable admonition the stronger.

You may say, that you 'are poor and 'have your bread to earn; that you have a 'family to maintain; that the times are 'hard, and expenses great.'—But admitting all these statements to be true, to what do they amount? They amount to a strong reason, why you should be diligent, and active, and prudent; but they do not amount to any reason, why you should be so *overcharged* with the cares of this life, as to be guilty of neglecting the concerns of the next. They require you to be industrious, frugal,

* 1 Tim. vi. 9.

and attentive to your business; but they do not require you to forget God; to be so cumbered about many things, as to neglect the one thing needful. You are expressly commanded "to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness:" to seek them *first:* above all other things, before all other things, in preference to all other things, to make all other things give way to them; and to manage all other things with an eye to them.

Perhaps you will say, 'that it is *impossible* 'to act in this manner, and according to 'this rule: that worldly affairs cannot on 'this principle be successfully managed.'— I answer, that what is impossible with man, is possible with God. He prescribes to us no duty which He will not enable us to discharge, if we earnestly pray to Him for strength. It is probable, indeed, that by following the direction given, you may not grow rich so quickly as you would otherwise do; you may not fare quite so well as your ungodly and worldly neighbours: you may meet with some disappointments and losses. But if you do not follow this direction, one point is clear, that you are under the government of a worldly spirit, and are actuated by an immoderate anxiety about worldly things. And if such be your condition, how great

is your danger! You are liable, every day, to all the dreadful consequences of dying in a state unprepared for death. You are liable this night to have your soul required of you. Then whose will those things be which you have provided? What will they profit you, when you shall stand before God? They will not yield you any comfort or help in that day. Nay, they will rise up in judgement against you. They have here filled your heart, which ought to have been given to God. They have been your idols, which you have loved and worshipped instead of God. Consequently, they will appear against you to your utter and unspeakable confusion. — Take heed, then, my brethren, "lest that day come upon you unawares." Be not overcharged with the cares of life. Pray for that faith, by which you may overcome the world. Seek after an interest in that Saviour, by whose "cross the world may be crucified unto you, and you unto the world."

With equal earnestness, let me also admonish you to guard against that indulgence of sensual appetite spoken of in the text. You have seen the danger of having your heart overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, lest death should overtake you in that state. Beware, then, how you expose

yourselves to so great a hazard. As to habitual drunkards, who "make a God of their belly," and "riot even in the day-time," there is, indeed, but little hope of making a serious impression on such persons. Dreadfully hardened as they must be in the ways of sin, and completely led captive by the Devil, there is but little probability of their listening to the voice of friendly admonitions. But who can tell, whether God may not bless the attempt, and, "peradventure, may give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth, that they may deliver themselves out of this snare of the Devil?" Consider, my brethren, before it is too late for consideration, consider your danger. Standing on the brink of eternal torments, you are daring the Almighty to plunge you into them. You are saying, 'I 'fear not God nor his wrath: I will have 'my pleasures, though hell be my portion 'for ever.'—And consider how soon it *may* be your portion. You have no security, but that the very next day in which you gratify your favourite lust, may be *that day* spoken of in the text; *that* day, which will turn all your joy into the most horrible misery, all your presumptuous hopes into utter despair, and will plunge you for ever into those flames, where not one drop of water

will be given to cool your burning tongue. If with these aweful considerations, thus solemnly urged, you can persist in your abominable practices, what more can be done to save you? Remember, that you have been seriously, that you have been affectionately warned. If you should perish, (which God forbid!) you will perish without excuse. Have pity upon yourselves; have pity upon your miserable souls. Why will ye die?

But there are others, also, who need the admonition, and to whom it may be addressed with more hope of success. I mean those, who being *habitually* free from the sin of drunkenness, are yet *occasionally* guilty of it: who allow themselves *sometimes* to run into excess, and think that the return of certain seasons and circumstances will excuse their conduct; or who suppose that because the sin is seldom committed, it is therefore little. But let me earnestly entreat you to beware of giving way to such false reasoning. No sin is little; and no allowed sin can be justified or excused. Remark the expression in the text, "Take heed to yourselves, lest *at any time* your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness:" *at any time;* no exception is made in favour of even an *occasional* excess. In fact, if you are *allowedly* guilty of even an occa-

sional excess, you are exposing yourself to the danger mentioned in the text. For can you be in a state prepared for dying, while you are wilfully and knowingly suffering yourself to fall into intemperance? Awake from this fatal slumber. Break off your sins, and especially this sin, by repentance. It may cost you some trouble. It may put you to some pain. You may find it difficult to withstand the entreaties of friends, or the scoffs and ridicule of ungodly persons, who will "think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." * But regard not these things. Let the fear of *that day* coming upon you unawares be deeply impressed on your heart; "for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

* 1 Peter, iv. 4.



SERMON X.

REBECCA'S IMPOSITION ON ISAAC CONSIDERED.

GENESIS, XXVII. 13.

And his Mother said unto Him, Upon me be thy curse, my Son: only obey my voice.

THE Chapter, from which these words are taken, contains an interesting portion of Scripture History. It relates the artifice which Jacob, by the advice of his mother, practised for obtaining his Father's Blessing. The text, in particular, sets before us Rebecca's answer, when Jacob, hesitating to comply with her proposal, had expressed his fears of bringing upon himself a Curse and not a Blessing. She said unto him: "Upon me be thy curse, my Son: only obey my voice."

Rebecca was, on the whole, a woman of undoubted piety. In this transaction, however, she appears in an unfavourable light. She is represented as engaged in an attempt to deceive her husband, and by fraud to

procure for her younger Son the blessing which Isaac intended for his first-born Esau. In this attempt, indeed, she did not act the principal part; but she was the author and adviser of it. It was undertaken at her suggestion, and executed by her contrivance. She may be considered as the prime cause and mover in the business; and though Jacob was justly chargeable with a part of the guilt, yet Rebecca is described as willingly taking the whole of it on herself; "Upon me be thy curse, my Son."

This language plainly shows, that she thought her conduct justifiable; and thus we have a melancholy instance of the way in which good people sometimes deceive themselves, and suffer their judgements to be misled by carnal reasonings, and the counsels of the natural heart.

In order, however, to obtain a clear insight into Rebecca's conduct on this occasion, two things are to be considered.

I. The *Object* which she had in view.

II. The *Means* which she used for attaining it.

I. Isaac being now old, having lost his sight, and hastening, as he supposed, towards his end, was desirous of settling his family concerns, that he might not have any

troubles of this kind to disturb him at the near approach of death. Among these concerns, the most important was the disposal of the Blessing, which, by divine direction, had been conferred on him by his father Abraham. This Blessing was of a peculiar kind. It included all those special blessings which God had engaged to bestow on Abraham and his seed. It comprehended the Promise of the Messiah, and of the Land of Canaan; and was typical also of spiritual and eternal blessings. Now, this Blessing, it might be supposed, would naturally go to the First-born. For which reason, and perhaps from a blameable partiality to Esau, Isaac designed to bestow it on him: and accordingly gave him directions to prepare for the receiving of it. No sooner, however, was Rebecca acquainted with her husband's intention, than she resolved, if possible, to defeat it. *She* wished the blessing to go, not to Esau the First-born, but to Jacob, her younger son. And what, may we ask, was the reason of this preference? Did she love Jacob best? It is probable that she did. His piety would greatly endear him to his mother, and would make him a peculiar comfort to her declining years; while the irreligious conduct of Esau had caused her much uneasiness, and had probably, in some

degree, weakened her attachment to him. Pious parents will carefully guard against indulging an undue partiality for one child above another; at the same time, it is hardly possible but that their affection will be strongest towards such as prove themselves most deserving of it. — But, in the present instance, Rebecca might have another motive for wishing that the blessing should be given to Jacob. She knew that he was fittest for receiving it. She knew that he highly valued it, not merely for the sake of any worldly benefit annexed to it, but on account of the spiritual promises contained in it. Esau, on the contrary, had repeatedly shown the greatest contempt of the blessing and its promises. On one occasion he had expressly parted with his interest in them, and had profanely sold it to his brother for a mess of pottage. In another instance, by taking to himself wives from the idolatrous nations of Canaan, he had plainly shown that he neither desired the blessing of Abraham, nor dreaded the wrath of God. — But even this reason, however sufficient it might have been, was not, we may conjecture, the chief motive by which Rebecca's mind was influenced. She had a still stronger reason for wishing to defeat her husband's purpose. She felt assured, that in this design he

was opposing the will and purpose of the Almighty.

God had long ago declared, in answer to her enquiry, even before the children had been born, that "the Elder should serve the younger."* This declaration, which, in fact, conveyed the blessing to Jacob, had been carefully treasured in her memory; and though now, either through infirmity forgotten, or through partiality overlooked by Isaac, was still remembered by her. In desiring, therefore, to prevent his design from taking place, and in attempting to procure the blessing for Jacob in preference to Esau, she knew that she was only desiring to do what God had designed should be done, and was merely attempting to fulfil those purposes which by revelation He had disclosed to her. Her desire, then, was good, and her attempt praise-worthy. The end which she proposed to herself was to prevent her husband from acting contrary to the divine will, and to assist in turning the blessing where God intended it should go. So far, then, as the *object* which she had in view was concerned, far from finding any thing to blame, we see much to commend. It sprang from her faith and piety, and

* Genesis, xxv. 23.

showed her zeal for the glory of God. — Let us consider,

II. The *Means* which she used for attaining this Object.

No sooner had she conceived her purpose than she formed a plan for accomplishing it. She had overheard her husband's directions to Esau, that he should "go and take some venison, and make savoury meat, such as his father loved, that he might eat and bless him before he died." She knew that some time would probably pass, before these directions could be fulfilled. Esau would be kept at a distance from home in procuring the venison. In the mean while, advantage might be taken of his absence, and of Isaac's blindness, to impose Jacob upon his Father in his brother Esau's stead. Such was her plan. Nothing was wanting to complete it but Jacob's consent; and having overcome his scruples, by promising to take all the consequences on herself, she instantly proceeded to execute her purpose. She took two kids, and made savoury meat, such as Isaac loved. She took goodly raiment of her son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob, that his father might be deceived by the smell of the raiment. She covered the hands of Jacob and

the smooth of his neck with the skins of the goats, that so he might be more like his brother, who was a hairy man: and thus prepared, she sent Jacob unto his father Isaac, to pretend that he was his first-born Esau, and under this false character to obtain the Blessing, and supplant his brother.

These were the *Means* which she used to attain her object. And would they had been such that we could approve and praise! Here, however, we are forced to withhold our commendation; nay, we must go farther, we must positively condemn her conduct, and declare it to have been utterly without excuse. We say nothing of the probability which there was of a discovery, and of the dangerous consequences which might have followed. Admitting that a discovery was very unlikely to take place; admitting that her plan was most wisely laid, with every prospect of success; yet of what kind was her wisdom? Was it that wisdom "which is from above, and which is first pure, and then peaceable, full of good fruits, and without hypocrisy?" Or rather, was it not that wisdom "which descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish?"* Was it that wisdom which our Lord prescribes, when he says; "Be ye

* James, iii. 15. 17.

wise as serpents, and harmless as doves?" Or rather, was it not the crooked policy of the old Serpent, who is a Liar and the Father of lies? Rebecca, indeed, could not but know, that to impose on her husband by means of his infirmity, and to tempt her son to the commission of falsehood and deception, were acts which in themselves were highly sinful. What may we suppose, then, were the arguments by which she would probably defend and even justify her conduct? She would say to herself, 'I am placed in very extra-'ordinary circumstances. Here is Isaac 'about to act in direct opposition to the 'divine Will. Here is the Blessing, which 'God has designed for Jacob, on the point 'of being given to Esau. Is it not my duty 'to prevent the purposes of the Almighty 'from being defeated? Though the means 'to which I may have recourse are such 'as on a *common* occasion might not be 'lawfully used, yet does not the *necessity* of 'the present case allow and even require 'me to use them?' But how vain and false would such reasoning be! What permission had Rebecca received "to do evil, that good might come?" Her duty was to be learned, not from the *purposes*, but from the *precepts* of the Almighty. Did she suppose that God could not complete his de-

signs without her committing sin in order to fulfil them? Or, did she think that sin would not be sin, because she dressed it in this specious covering?

My brethren, there is the greater necessity for exposing and condemning the fallacy of this reasoning, because it is a way of reasoning frequently used and defended in the world. The standard of duty is oftentimes very little understood and regarded, even by those who make stronger pretensions than others to the character of moral persons. Forgetting that the perfect law of God is to be the only rule of all their thoughts, words, and actions, they argue and act, on some occasions, as if they had the liberty of setting up another rule in the place of this. They seem to think that if the *end* which they have in view be good, it is of no great consequence by what *means* they follow it. Let us suppose, for instance, that some object in itself very desirable, which promises much good to man, and much glory to God, may probably be attained; but, in order to attain it, as in Rebecca's case, some dishonesty, falsehood, or prevarication, appears to be necessary. Now, the Law of God strictly forbids every practice of this kind; and, consequently, commands us to give up all thoughts of attaining the object, however

desirable, by such means. But the persons in question deny this conclusion. They say, 'The *End* will justify the *Means*. 'Though the means be unlawful, yet the 'end is in itself so good that it is no sin 'to use them.' Let us meet this reasoning fairly. Let us see whether it may not be brought to justify the commission of every possible sin. If you may break one part of the divine law to attain a good end; your neighbour, for the same reason, may break another. If you may deceive or lie, because by falsehood or deceit you may think that you can do some good; another, on the same principle, may forswear himself and kill, if perjury and murder appear to be necessary means for accomplishing some desirable object. The reasoning, in both instances, rests on the same grounds; and if it be sound in one case, what prevents it from being so in the other also? Perhaps you answer, 'The cases stated are extreme. 'Perjury and murder are sins so great, that 'no end, however good, can justify the 'commission of them.' While I admit the force of this conclusion, in return I would enquire, Where have you learned that any sin is little? Be assured that all sins in themselves are great. They are all committed against God. They are all breaches of his

law. He who has forbidden us to kill, or take his name in vain, has equally forbidden us to deceive or lie. The attainment of an end, however good, will no more justify us in practising falsehood, than in committing murder. In all cases, the Law of God is to be our rule. In no case can we claim the privilege of setting it aside. Rebecca's sin, however she might excuse it to herself, was sufficient to have ruined her soul: and unquestionably, unless, through God's grace, she had afterwards repented and obtained forgiveness, it would have ruined her soul. Such is the case with every sin. Whatever good may come of the evil which we do, that good will not excuse the evil, nor make it less. — But it may be farther said, 'Rebecca's plan succeeded. Jacob, by his deception, obtained the Blessing: and thus God, by making the means successful, showed that he approved them.' —— It is true that God permitted Rebecca's plan to be successful; but it does not therefore follow that He approved it. Indeed, it is utterly impossible that He could approve falsehood in any shape or in any case. He permitted it to be practised, and he over-ruled it for the fulfilling of his own purposes: but this is a very different thing from approving it. God over-rules the counsels of

the wicked, and makes them work together for his own glory: but can we suppose that He approves them? When the traitor Judas betrayed his master Jesus; when the Jews, demanding his blood, brought him before Pilate; when Pilate delivered him to be crucified; they all helped to the accomplishment of that great work, which God had before determined should be done. But, did he therefore approve their conduct in doing it? Far otherwise: He decidedly condemned it. Thus, though Rebecca thought to promote the divine glory: yet as the Lord did not require, so neither could He approve the means to which she had recourse. Nay, if we attentively examine the whole matter, in all its effects and consequences, we shall discover clear marks of God's displeasure against both her and Jacob, for their parts in this transaction. The enmity which Esau conceived against his brother for having thus supplanted him in Isaac's blessing; and his avowed determination of hereafter avenging the injury, filled Rebecca's heart with the most distressing fears for Jacob's life: till at length, in order to provide for his safety, she was forced to send him into a distant land, and to be utterly separated from him for above twenty yēars. In these family afflictions, she would see the

righteous consequences of her carnal policy, and would, doubtless, bitterly lament the improper step which she had taken. — As for Jacob, in the danger to which his life was exposed under his father's roof, from Esau's murderous wrath; in the imposition which he himself suffered in respect to Rachel, whom he loved; in the various hardships which he endured in Laban's service; and in the terror which, on his return, he felt at the approach of Esau, lest he should "smite him, and the mother with the children;" in all these troubles and distresses, which were the evident consequences of the deception practised on his father, Jacob would read the divine displeasure against his sin, and would feelingly learn, that the law of God is not, under any pretence, to be broken with impunity, even where the eternal punishment incurred may be mercifully remitted. Sin ever brings along with it shame and sorrow: and those who permit themselves to do evil that good may come, will surely in the end deplore their worldly wisdom, and presumptuous conduct.

It may yet, however, be farther asked, 'What ought Rebecca to have done? Was 'she, knowingly, to have let her husband act 'contrary to the divine intentions, with-

'out endeavouring to prevent him? Was 'she to have taken no steps in order to 'have procured the blessing for Jacob?' I answer, There were means, which she might lawfully have used for the attainment of her end; and to these she ought to have confined herself. She should have reasoned the matter with Isaac. She should meekly have pointed out to him the mistake which he was on the point of committing. She should have reminded him of the revelation which God had given of his will in this affair; and thus, by persuasion and argument, she should have endeavoured to turn him from his purpose. There is reason to think that such a conduct would probably have succeeded. Isaac, when he afterwards discovered what had been done, appears to have suddenly recollected himself; and, shuddering at the danger from which he had escaped, in a very striking manner, confirmed the blessing to Jacob: "*Yea* and he *shall* be blessed." — It is, therefore, likely that he would before have yielded to a mild remonstrance, affectionately urged. At any rate, Rebecca should have tried this way. She should have added also to it strong faith and fervent prayer. These are the weapons of our warfare. With these arms, she would have prevailed as certainly

as she could hope to do by her own crooked policy. By using these means she would have honoured God; and, instead of bringing on herself guilt, and shame, and sorrow, would have laid the foundation for future peace and joy.

On the whole, my brethren, let us diligently cultivate that simplicity and sincerity of conduct which the Gospel of Christ enjoins. Let us "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Let us have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Let us not follow a good end by forbidden means: nor think to justify sin by saying that we are doing God service. God is not to be so served. Especially, let us watch over our heart, which is "deceitful above all things." Let us not listen to its carnal suggestions. Let us bring every thing to the standard of God's law. When deliberating on any doubtful step, let us not ask, 'What will be the consequence? Will 'the end be good or bad?' Rather let us ask, 'What say the Scriptures? May this step 'be lawfully taken or not?' Let us be earnest and constant in prayer for light and direction from above: and may the Lord preserve us from all evil, and keep us to his heavenly kingdom!

SERMON XI.

ST. PAUL, A PATTERN OF THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.

1 TIMOTHY, i. 16.

Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

THE character of St. Paul, on many accounts, is highly deserving of our attention. His constant labours, his successful ministry, his Christian attainments, must ever be regarded with admiration, delight, and profit. The circumstance, however, which most powerfully claims our notice, is his miraculous conversion, or that exceeding abundant grace which was vouchsafed in bringing him from darkness to light, and in making him a believer, and even a preacher, of that Gospel which he had before denied and persecuted. The consideration of this

extraordinary event is full of instruction; but, especially, it sets before us the most encouraging display of God's rich mercy towards sinners. It is this view of the subject which St. Paul himself gives in the text. Having spoken in very strong terms of his own unworthiness and guilt, he adds, "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

In considering this passage, let us fix our thoughts on two particulars contained in it.

I. The mercy which St. Paul obtained.

II. The cause for which he obtained it.

I. To say that any one sinner has more pretensions to God's mercy than another, would be to talk absurdly; for no sinner can have *any* pretensions to mercy. Mercy, in its nature and its operations, is wholly free. It is favour shown to objects, who, in themselves, are utterly unworthy of it. Sinners, indeed, may greatly differ in their degrees of guilt. But still the least guilty sinner can lay no *claim* to the divine compassion: for, in that case, to show compassion to him would be an act, not of *mercy*, but of *justice*. In this respect, all sinners are on a level. They all need mercy, and they must

all receive it as a free gift; which none deserve, and to which, therefore, no one can have better pretensions than another.

But while we admit this truth, it is no contradiction to say, that some sinners stand in need of greater mercy than others; that some, according to our view of things, are less likely to obtain mercy than others; that some, having contracted guilt of a deeper dye, require a larger measure of grace to absolve and cleanse them than others, whose sins are comparatively of a lighter hue. To pardon the least sinner is great mercy; but to pardon a sinner who has long resisted the calls of grace, who has sinned with a *high* hand, and has *hardened* himself in wickedness; to pardon a sinner of this kind would be still greater mercy. Such an act of grace would more strikingly show the riches of divine love. Now, such is the act of grace which St. Paul considers to have been shown in his favour. While he tells us that he "obtained mercy," he yet speaks of himself as of all men the least likely to have obtained it; yea, of all men, as he thought, the most unfit to obtain it. "*Howbeit*, I obtained mercy." This is a way of speaking which implies that there were in his case some peculiar circumstances which made it more difficult, at least less probable, for him to obtain

mercy than for others; circumstances, therefore, which, when mercy was obtained, proved it to have been beyond measure great and wonderful. Let us see what these circumstances were. They, in fact, are all contained in two particulars; the character and conduct of the Apostle before he obtained mercy.

In speaking of St. Paul's character and conduct before his conversion to Christianity, we have good ground for saying that he was in a more than common degree a sinner. He tells us himself, under a deep conviction of his guilt, that he was "the chief of sinners." And, indeed, he declares the same thing in the text, when he says, "unto me first Jesus Christ showed forth all long-suffering;" that is, unto me *first*, not in order of time, not before others in this sense; for many had thus obtained mercy before St. Paul; but first in *rank*, in *guilt*, in *eminence*, as a *sinner:* unto me, who have sinned more than others, and stand foremost in the list of obstinate offenders.

But what had been St. Paul's peculiar guilt before his conversion to Christianity? Had he been an idolator, or a publican? Had he been a drunkard, a fornicator, or a slave to his licentious appetites? Had he been unjust, dishonest, or covetous? Had

he oppressed the poor, the fatherless, or the widow? Had he polluted the Sabbath? Had he openly expressed his contempt and disregard of religious duties? Was it in all, or in any, of these respects that he had been thus eminently guilty? No: not in one of them. We have reason to believe that, in all these respects, he had been far better than the generality of men. "Touching the righteousness which is in the Law, he had been blameless." *

Does this appear strange to us? Does it seem difficult to understand how St. Paul, though neither an Idolator, nor a Publican, though neither an immoral, nor a profane person, might yet have been, and even was, the Chief of Sinners? The reason is, we are accustomed to judge of sin merely by the outward act. We are apt to measure the guilt of the sinner, merely by the injury which he does to his fellow-creatures. We forget that sin begins in the heart, and that it may be conceived and brought forth there, notwithstanding that it does not show itself in any outward act. We forget that the sinfulness of sin consists in its being committed against God; and that the sinner's guilt is to be measured by the opposition and enmity of his heart to the Divine Character

* Philip. iii. 6.

and Will. —— Here, then, we shall discover St. Paul's sins to have been of crimson dye. Outwardly moral in his conduct, even zealous in his religious professions, he had been inwardly a bitter enemy to God and holiness. He had been full of pride and unbelief, the two worst sins of which a man can be guilty. He had hated the Gospel, because it opposed his Prejudices, and bade him lay aside his self-righteous hopes of justifying himself by his works. And because he had hated the Gospel, he had refused to attend to the proofs which might have convinced him of its truth. He had obstinately shut his eyes that he might not see, and his ears that he might not hear: while he had conceived and cherished the most rancorous enmity against the Holy Jesus and his faithful followers. — Now, if the description of the Apostle's guilt were to end here, we must allow that it was guilt of no common measure. But the description does not end here; much remains to be added. While such had been the Sin *indulged* in the heart, it had not been *confined* to the heart. It had broken forth into outward acts; and those of the worst kind: into blasphemy and persecution. St. Paul tells us that he had been "a *Blasphemer*." * "Out of the abundance of the heart, the

* 1 Tim. i. 13.

mouth speaketh. An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things." Perhaps, my brethren, we take not words into our account of sin. We may suppose that an hasty expression at least, whether impure, or profane, or passionate, will escape unnoticed, and brings no guilt upon the soul. But we may be assured, that such suppositions are not only without any foundation from Scripture, but are directly contrary to Scripture. "For every *idle* word," much more then for every *wicked* word, "shall men give account." And when all the wicked words, which a wicked man has spoken, shall be brought to light and publicly known, we may judge how immensely such a discovery will add to his guilt and his confusion. St. Paul felt how greatly he had sinned in this respect. How many blasphemous speeches he had uttered against the blessed Jesus, and the Gospel of his Grace! How many false, malicious, and blood-thirsty words he had spoken against the unoffending Christians!— Nor had *words* been sufficient to express his rage against them. He had taken upon himself the dreadful office of a *persecutor*. He had "made havock of the Church," entering into every house, and without regard to sex or age, throwing the Christians into pri-

son. Hear his own account of the matter: "I persecuted this way unto the death:" "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief Priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft, in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."*— After this representation, in what light does the Apostle's Character and Conduct before his conversion to Christianity appear? Did he much overstate the truth, when he said, "of sinners I am Chief?" Do we not see the full meaning of his expression in the text, "*Howbeit* I obtained *mercy?*" — 'Vile as I was sunk, far beneath the com-'mon level of ordinary sinners; an enemy 'to God; a proud blasphemer; an inju-'rious and a bloody persecutor; I yet ob-'tained mercy. — There was mercy with 'God in Christ Jesus even for *me*. He who 'came into the world to save sinners, could 'find mercy for such a one as I am. Not-'withstanding my aggravated guilt, he did not 'shut me out from his compassion. Blessed 'be his name! where sin had abounded, 'Grace did much more abound.' Such was

* Acts, xxii. 4.; xxvi. 10, 11.

the free, the rich, the wonderful mercy, which St. Paul obtained.—I set before you,

II. The cause for which he obtained it.

Perhaps on hearing this account of the Apostle, it might be proudly and presumptuously asked: "Why did St. Paul obtain 'mercy? Why did God show mercy to so 'great and obstinate an offender? Or, if 'the Lord designed in due time to convert 'him to the faith, and to make him a 'Preacher of the Gospel, why did he suffer 'him to run such lengths in sin, and not 'earlier prevent him by his grace?' In answer to such questions, it might be sufficient to say: "Nay, but O man, who art thou, that repliest against God?"' or to recite these words of the Almighty, "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."*—But we are enabled in this instance to go farther. We are enabled to give a more direct answer to these enquiries. We *can* state the reason, *why* St. Paul obtained mercy: *why* he was permitted to go on so long in sin: *why* he was afterwards brought to the knowledge and faith of Christ. He says himself, "For this cause I obtained mercy; that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them,

* Rom. ix. 20.—Exodus, xxxiii. 19.

which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."—The case of St. Paul was intended on purpose to show forth the riches of divine grace, to give proof of the unfathomable love of Christ in pardoning the Chief of Sinners, and thus to afford an encouraging example to all Sinners in every age who should flee to Christ for refuge.

But let us more attentively examine the points here stated by the Apostle.—"Jesus Christ showed to him all long-suffering." Long-suffering towards Sinners is one of the most glorious perfections of God. It comprehends that slowness to wrath, that unwillingness to punish, that forbearance under provocations, that patient waiting for repentance, that readiness to receive the returning sinner, which the Almighty claims as peculiarly belonging to Himself, and which he so abundantly manifests in his dealings with men. But when were these Divine Qualities more clearly manifested than in the instance of St. Paul?—"To him was shown *all* long-suffering." This glorious Perfection was exercised towards him in the greatest possible extent. God bore long with him; and though grievously insulted, yet suffered not his displeasure to arise. How provoking must have been the pride and unbelief of this Chief of Sinners,

while cloaked under the mask of religion! How offensive must have been his prayers and offerings, while proceeding from a heart at enmity with God! How loudly did his blaspheming language and persecuting spirit call for vengeance on him! But the vengeance, so loudly called for, was still withheld. Nay, at length, when; not content with driving the Christians from Jerusalem, he pursued them to foreign cities; when, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord," he hastened to Damascus, that he might more speedily complete their ruin; not even then, was the Divine Patience exhausted towards him. At that very time, in that very place, the Lord met him with tokens of love and favour; subdued his stubborn heart; and reconciled him to himself. No sooner, under a conviction of his guilt and misery, did he call for mercy, but he obtained it. No sooner was it said of him, "Behold he prayeth," but Ananias in a vision was directed to go and comfort him.

We here see what is meant by *all long-suffering*. Let us, then, remember, that in this instance it was shown on purpose for a *Pattern*. The long-suffering shown to the Apostle was intended to teach us, in a manner more forcibly than words could teach us,

that God is slow to anger, and of tender mercy; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It was intended to impress upon us by *example*, that most important and comfortable truth, which the Scriptures throughout declare, that "in Christ all fulness dwells*:" fulness of mercy, grace, and goodness: that in him are riches unsearchable: pardon for sinners of every rank, description, and age: love which passeth knowledge; compassion which knows no bounds. God grant that the truth thus taught us, may come with power and efficacy to every heart! May it speak peace and consolation to every wounded spirit!

Are there any among us, whose souls are weighed down with a sense of unpardoned sin: who, awakened to a sight of their guilt and danger, are filled with distressing fears, with desponding thoughts; and are ready to conclude that there is no mercy for them? Be not cast down, as men without hope. Paul obtained mercy. Why may not you obtain it? Is there any thing in your case so different from that of the Apostle, as justly to prevent your drawing comfort from his example?—Perhaps you say, 'I am a great

* Col. i. 19.

'and grievous sinner.' So was Paul.—'I 'have continued long in rebellion against 'God.' So did Paul.—'I have been very 'provoking in my sins.' So had Paul been. —'I have been guilty of slighting the Gos- 'pel, and of despising the long-suffering of 'God.' So had Paul been.—But still you say, 'Paul had not been *such* a sinner as I 'have been: he had not been an immoral, 'an impure, or an intemperate sinner.'— True; but he had been a blaspheming, a persecuting sinner. If he had not been the slave of lust, he had yet been the slave of pride, of spiritual pride. And have you any Scriptural grounds for concluding that the mercy of God, which was so abundantly shown in the one instance, will be withholden in the other? Nay, does not the text assert the very contrary? Does it not directly affirm, that the Lord's merciful dealing with Paul, was a *pattern* of his merciful dealing with others: and that it was *designed* to be a *pattern* for the comfort and encouragement of all them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting? Take, then, the comfort and encouragement thus provided, thus intended for you. "*Believe* in Christ to life everlasting." Flee to him for deliverance from the wrath to come. Rely on his pro-

mises of forgiveness. Plead nothing but his merits in your favour. Put your soul into his hands; and doubt not but that you shall find his mercy greater than your largest wishes.

But before I conclude this subject, let me endeavour to guard it from abuse. There is a sad propensity in man to wrest the Scriptures to his own destruction, and to turn the sweet and wholesome food, which they provide, into the most deadly poison. Some of you may be tempted to make the pattern set before us in the text an occasion of greater sin. You may perversely argue, that because the Lord was long-suffering to Paul, while he continued in his sins, he will, therefore, be long-suffering to you, while you continue in your sins. 'Paul,' you may say, 'obtained mercy, and so shall 'we. As he long remained a sinner, and 'found forgiveness; so we, though we long 'remain sinners, shall find forgiveness too.' But beware, my brethren, how you indulge such an impious, such a dangerous thought. — Paul, indeed, obtained mercy, but he did not sin on the presumptuous hope that he *should* obtain it. In this respect your case and his would be utterly unlike. His sins were totally without ex-

cuse; but yet, in the very act of committing them, he had a zeal, however mistaken, for God; and verily *thought* with himself that he *ought* to do many things "contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Can you say this of yourselves? While you are wilfully continuing in the commission of sin, can you from your hearts say, that you verily think you are doing what you *ought?* Should you attempt to utter such a falsehood, your very intention of hereafter repenting and obtaining mercy would convict you. — If, therefore, you are resolved to go on in sin, you must abide the consequences: but dare not to draw any argument in your favour from the case before us: for it affords you none. The mercy which St. Paul obtained gives no encouragement to a continuance in sin. Far otherwise; it calls you to repentance. The long-suffering of God should lead you to repentance. The thought that God has borne so long with your offensive provocations; that he has held his hand, while you have dared him to hurl destruction on your head; that he has daily nourished, protected, blessed you, while you have daily abused his gifts and despised his mercies; that, notwith-

standing your past rebellions, He is still ready to pardon all your sins, and to take you into favour. — This thought should break the heart of stone, and cause the waters of godly sorrow to flow down. God grant that it may be so! that each of you, smiting on your breast, may say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

SERMON XII.

THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD WISER THAN THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

LUKE, xvi. 8.

For the Children of this world are in their generation wiser than the Children of light.

THESE words were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ on the following occasion: He had been telling those who were present of a certain steward, who for negligence and dishonesty had incurred his master's displeasure, and was about to be put out of his stewardship. The man had no sooner heard that he was to lose his place, than he began to think with himself how he should escape the distress and want to which this calamity would expose him. He was too proud to beg, and either unable or unwilling to work. At last he resolved on the following expedient; by which he hoped to secure to himself a livelihood, when his

present means of support should fail. He called his master's debtors to him, and made such an alteration in their several accounts, as would give the appearance of their owing far less than was the real amount of their debts. By this artful project, his master, indeed, would be greatly defrauded; but his own interest would be effectually served; for the debtors, being thus favoured by him, would not only be disposed to favour and assist him in return, but also, being made partners in his dishonesty, they would afterwards, from fear of detection, be unable to resist any demands which he might make upon them. Such was his dishonest, but politic design. It was not, however, so well concealed, but that it reached his master's ears; who, when he heard of it, "commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely." He doubtless strongly disapproved, and severely condemned the *iniquity* of the proceeding; but at the same time, he could not but express an admiration of its *wisdom* and *policy*. And this was the occasion which gave rise to the observation in the text. The sagacity and cleverness of this unprincipled man, in providing against the evils which threatened him, called forth from our Lord this pointed remark, that "the Children of this world are in their generation wiser than the Chil-

dren of light." In discoursing on these words, I shall endeavour,

I. To show more distinctly the Meaning of the Remark contained in them.

II. To point out in some particular instances its Truth and Propriety.

I. In endeavouring to show more distinctly the Meaning of the Remark in the text, I would first direct your notice to the persons, whom our Lord here mentions and compares together: "The Children of this world, and the Children of light." The expression here used, is one very common in Scripture. We read of the "Children of disobedience," "the Children of wrath," "the Children of wisdom." Nor is there any difficulty in understanding these phrases. By "the Children of disobedience," are clearly meant the disobedient; those who are living in disobedience to God's commandments. "The Children of wrath," are such, that by sin; have incurred the wrath of God. "The Children of wisdom," are those who value and seek after true wisdom. In like manner, then, by "the Children of this world," we are to understand *worldly* persons; those who make this world their God; who are devoted to the cares, the pleasures, or the pursuits of the present life;

who mind earthly things, have their treasure here, and desire no better portion than this world can yield: while, on the other hand, by "the Children of light," are meant *religious* persons; those who having been "some time in darkness, are now light in the Lord:" whose understandings have been enlightened to see the truth as it is in Jesus; who, no longer walking after the course of this world, profess to be seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly one.——Such are the persons of whom our Lord here speaks, and concerning whom he remarks, that "the Children of this world are in their generation wiser than the Children of light." Now it is clear, that this Remark cannot be understood in a full and unqualified sense. Our Lord can never be supposed absolutely to say that worldly, irreligious persons are wiser than religious people: for to say this would be to contradict the whole tenor of his own discourses, and the universal testimony of Scripture. In the Word of God, Religion is constantly represented as Wisdom, and Irreligion as Folly. It can, therefore, be only in respect to some particular point, and not in a general view, that our Lord makes this Remark in the text. In the same manner as when the Master is said to have commended the unjust Steward; he did not

mean to convey a general commendation of his conduct; but only intended, in a particular instance, to notice his ingenuity and foresight.—The highest *exercise* and clearest *mark* of true wisdom is the choice of a right *end;* the fixing on such an object of pursuit as is deserving of our preference, and will repay our trouble. Now in this respect, no comparison between the wisdom of worldly and of religious persons can for a moment be maintained. The *End*, which worldly men choose, sufficiently marks their folly. The object which they fix on, in some shape or other, is worldly happiness. This they propose to themselves as the chief good, and follow it with all their might. But it is an object which will never repay their trouble, and, therefore, is not deserving their preference. On the other hand, the *End* which religious people have in view, bears the broadest stamp of wisdom. Their object is one every way deserving their choice and labour; for it is a treasure in *heaven*, an enduring substance, the salvation of their souls, an eternal life with God in glory. Here, then, so far as the object in pursuit is concerned, the Children of light most decidedly surpass in wisdom the Children of this world.

Another mark of wisdom is to follow an end when chosen, by the most suitable *Means.*

Having once fixed on an object, a man's wisdom will appear in the steps which he takes for attaining it. He who follows it in a way the most likely to gain his end, will in this respect show himself the wiser person. Such was the wisdom of the unjust Steward. As to the object which he had in view, namely, to support himself in Idleness by defrauding his master, he was most unwise; for dishonesty is always the worst policy. But at the same time, in the *Means*, to which he had recourse, for gaining his purpose, he showed his wisdom; wisdom indeed of a very bad quality, and not really deserving of the name, but still such as discovered a large share of shrewdness and ability. He took a way the most likely to succeed; and so far, in this respect, he "did wisely."—And so far, then, in this respect, "the Children of this world are wiser than the Children of light." In the choice and use of Means, in the way of following their object, worldly people shew more wisdom than religious people. They are wiser "*in their generation*," they act more considerately, and consult better for their worldly and temporal interests, than religious persons do for their spiritual and eternal concerns. And here we distinctly see the Meaning of the Remark in the text.—I shall now proceed,

II. To point out, in some particular instances, the Truth and Propriety of this Remark. That worldly people consult better for their temporal interests, than religious persons for their spiritual concerns, will be plain from considering, in the first place, the *degree* of *Diligence* and *Activity*, which they severally exert. The worldly man, be his object what it may, is unwearied in following it. Whether he aim at the enlargement of his trade, the advancement of his family, the improvement of his estate, the acquisition of a great name, or the enjoyment of pleasure, still his mind is always alive in pursuit of its favourite object. It is ever uppermost in his thoughts. He is constantly on the watch for some favourable opportunity of promoting its attainment; and eagerly avails himself of every opportunity which offers itself. Not a day, not an hour passes, but some plan is formed, some steps are taken, for furthering the accomplishment of his wishes. Nothing which may be done to-day is put off till to-morrow. Nothing which he has the means of doing is left undone. He rises early, he late takes rest; he eats the bread of carefulness; while increasing obstacles and discouraging appearances only quicken his endeavours, and call forth greater exertions. Such are the Activity and

Diligence which worldly men exert in their worldly callings. Are religious persons equally active and diligent in their spiritual concerns? Truth compels us to say that they are not. They have a great work on their hands; but they are oftentimes sadly indolent in performing it. They have many enemies to overcome, many temptations to resist, many lusts to subdue, many duties to fulfil; but, alas! they are apt to give way to sloth, and to be careless and negligent, where they ought to be active and alert. They suffer many opportunities of doing good to slip away unimproved. They defer till to-morrow, what ought to be done to-day. They let their good resolutions be overcome for want of a more steady exertion. They do not strive as they ought to do. They do not derive from the divine ordinances so much good as they might. Even in the House of Prayer, their "soul still cleaveth unto the dust." Their attention is often distracted, their hearts are cold, their devotions are languid. Instead of pressing forward towards perfection, they are too apt to be satisfied with present attainments. Instead of going forth in the strength of the Lord, and fighting boldly in the good fight of faith, they are too prone to be discouraged at seeming difficulties, to give way to un-

reasonable fears, and to stop in the path of duty, saying, "There is a lion in the way." —Thus, in respect to Diligence and Activity in following the object of their pursuit, the Children of this world far surpass the Children of light.

The same may be said, in the next place, as to the *Degree* of *Foresight* and *Circumspection*, which they severally exercise. As worldly men are very quick-sighted in discovering their interest, so they are very long-sighted in discerning it afar off. They look forward to effects and consequences as connected with their worldly projects. They forecast in their minds whether such or such distant events will hinder or promote their favourite object. They provide against evils which they foresee are coming. They are seldom taken by surprise. They guard against disappointment. They profit by past experience.—But how different, in this respect, is oftentimes the conduct of Religious Persons as to their spiritual concerns! How little Circumspection and Foresight do they, comparatively, exercise! Though repeatedly admonished of approaching dangers, they suffer themselves at last to be taken by surprise. Though repeatedly overcome by such or such a temptation, yet they do not watch and strengthen themselves as

they might do, against future attacks from the same quarter. Though they cannot but know by past experience, that some particular circumstances, employments, or companies, prove highly injurious to their spiritual interests, yet they are frequently very remiss in their endeavours to avoid this danger, or, if it cannot be avoided, in preparing to meet it. Many a time are they thus constrained to lament their miscarriages, which a little precaution and vigilance might have prevented, and to take shame to themselves for the want of that circumspection and foresight, in which they see their worldly neighbours so far superior.

Take another instance of the Truth and Propriety of the remark in the text. The Children of this world exceed the Children of light, not only in Activity and Diligence, not only in Foresight and Circumspection, but also in *that Decision and Singleness of Mind*, with which they pursue their favourite end. Worldly men follow their worldly interests, with a determination, which makes every thing else either give way to it, or help to the attainment of it. Whatever may be the object of their pursuit, whether it be money, or pleasure, or honour, they suffer nothing to interfere with it, or to draw off their attention from it. Every thing

else is sacrificed to the acquisition of it. All their efforts are directed towards this one single point. Now it is plain, that this way of following an object must be attended with great advantages. For the mind, being neither distracted by a variety of pursuits, nor turned aside by other considerations, from its main point, applies and directs its whole undivided force and ingenuity to the attainment of its end; and when thus applied and directed, how probable is it, that such efforts will succeed! But far different is the case with religious persons. *They* show not this decision and singleness of mind in their spiritual concerns. Though it be their main object to please God, and to save their souls, yet they do not make every thing else give way to this as they ought to do. It is true, indeed, that they do not actually attempt to serve God and Mammon: but yet it is also true, that the love of the world is not so utterly brought into subjection, but that they too often suffer themselves to be diverted from their chief purpose, by worldly cares or pleasures. It is true, indeed, that they do not wilfully obey sin, in any of the lusts thereof; but it is also true, that sin is not so entirely subdued in their hearts, but that they are too often drawn aside, and hindered in their spiritual

course by its remaining power in their souls. Thus, though they do not follow religion with a divided mind, yet they too often pursue it with a distracted one. They too often suffer lower objects immoderately to engage their attention, and to take it off from their grand concern. Hence it comes to pass, that they do not make so decided a progress in the ways of God as they might; and thus it appears, that they do not consult for their spiritual concerns, so well as the Children of this world do for their temporal interests.

Having thus explained the meaning of the Remark in the text, and also shown in some particular instances its Truth and Propriety, I would now shortly apply the subject, by addressing myself,

1. To those among us who are really seeking God, and are intending and endeavouring to lead a holy and religious life. To such among us, the subject is both humbling and instructive. It is humbling, by showing us how far we fall short of doing what we ought to do. It is instructive, by showing us how we may do better for the time to come. We have seen in what respects the Children of this world are wiser than the Children of light. But, surely, this ought not to be. Consider the difference of the objects, which

worldly and religious persons are following. Worldly persons are following an object in itself fleeting, perishing, and comparatively worthless; an object, which may never be attained; and which, if attained, will certainly disappoint their expectation, and must soon be taken from them for ever. But religious persons are following an object in itself substantial, lasting, and of infinite value; an object, which they are sure of attaining; and which, when attained, will far exceed all their hopes, and will never be taken away. With such disproportion in the objects pursued, *ought* the Children of this world to be wiser in their way of conducting the pursuit than the Children of light? *Ought* they, who are seeking merely a worldly treasure, to show more diligence and activity, more foresight and circumspection, more decision and singleness of mind in attaining their end, than they who are seeking a heavenly treasure? Are we not ashamed to think, that we who profess to be striving for an incorruptible crown, a crown of righteousness and glory, should be less active, less earnest, less anxious in our endeavours to obtain it, than worldly men are to obtain the corruptible things of this life? Let us awake from this disgraceful sleep. Let us act in a manner more becom-

ing our pretensions. Let us do more credit to the religion which we profess. Let us be instructed even by worldly men. Though we cannot applaud their judgement, or account them wise in respect to the *object* which they pursue; nay, though in this respect we must decidedly condemn their choice, and loudly proclaim their folly; yet let us so far benefit by their example, as to copy their diligence, circumspection, and zeal; and thus learn to exercise in a better cause, and to nobler purposes, that wisdom which they display in their inferior concerns. Let us remember, that it is not enough to seek: we must strive; we must labour to grow in grace, and improve our talents; for, according to our spiritual growth and improvement, will be our degree of happiness and glory hereafter. — I must say a few words,

2. To those Worldly Persons of whom we have been speaking. My brethren, I have been showing you what is that Wisdom, for which our Lord commends you in the text. Think not, however, that because He commends your wisdom, he therefore approves your conduct. Far otherwise. The Master commended the unjust Steward for his wisdom, but he did not, and could not, commend him for his dishonesty. And in what respect do you differ from this Steward?

So long as you are setting your affections on earthly things, and seeking your happiness in the world instead of in God, you are defrauding Him. You are robbing Him of that honour, and glory, and service, which are due to Him alone. And can he approve what you are doing? Be assured, however, He may so far commend your foresight, ingenuity, and diligence, as to hold them up to his own people for their imitation and benefit, He yet entirely disapproves and severely condemns your conduct. Glory not, then, in your worldly wisdom: for it is a wisdom which will not only profit you nothing, but which, in the end, will ruin your soul. Renounce this wisdom, and become really wise, wise unto salvation. Seek the wisdom which is from above. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." The prudence, activity, and watchfulness, which you are consuming on the unprofitable pursuits of this world, if rightly directed and employed, will procure for you an incorruptible inheritance. God give you grace thus to direct and employ them for his mercy's sake in Jesus Christ!

SERMON XIII.

TENDENCY OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES TO PRODUCE TRUE CONTENTMENT.

PHILIPPIANS, iv. 11, 12.

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need.

THERE have been few persons, who have been put to heavier trials of patience and temper than St. Paul. He had endured many and great hardships; "in journeyings often; in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often; in hunger and thirst, in fastings

often; in cold and nakedness."* At the very time of his writing this epistle to the Philippians, he was a prisoner at Rome for Christ's sake. Yet this is the man whom we find declaring in the text, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need."

Now on comparing this declaration of the Apostle with the account of his trials and sufferings, shall we think that he naturally differed from other men; that he was not subject to the same feelings, infirmities, and sinful tempers, with the rest of his fellow-creatures? His own words to the people of Lystra will not allow us to think thus: for he tells them, that he was "a man of like passions with them†;" and so far from this contented disposition being *natural* to Him, he expressly says in the text, that he had *acquired* it. "I have *learned*, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content: every where, and in all things, I am *instructed* both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need." But *where* had

* 2 Cor. xi. 26, 27. † Acts, xiv. 15.

he learned this lesson? *Where* had he been instructed in these things? At the feet of his master, Gamaliel; in the schools of the Pharisees; of the Jewish doctors; or of the Heathen Philosophers? These teachers might have commended the virtue of Contentment: they might have shown how reasonable it was in itself, and how necessary to the happiness of man: but to teach this lesson with effect; to put their followers in possession of this virtue,—was not in their power. St. Paul had not learned it of them. It was at the feet of Jesus, in the School of Christian Philosophy, that he had been taught this lesson. It was since he had learned "to count all things loss *for Christ*, and *for his sake* to suffer the loss of all things," that he had known "both how to be abased and how to abound." It was in the School of godly discipline and Christian experience, that he had acquired this knowledge. And in this School the same knowledge may always be acquired. The heavenly doctrines of the Gospel all tend to produce it. Christian Principles, when received into the heart, and suffered to bring forth their natural fruit, necessarily lead to true Contentment; and the more decidedly the Disciple of Christ lives under the influence of his divine religion, the nearer will he come to the

happy experience of the Apostle stated in the text. This is a truth which I shall endeavour to explain and enforce; and with this view I shall show two things,

I. That Christianity takes away the natural Causes of Discontent.

II. That it furnishes very powerful motives for the exercise of a Contented Mind.

I. One cause of discontent is pride. Men are naturally proud. They have high thoughts of their own merits and pretensions. They think that nothing is too good for them: that they have a claim to every comfort and enjoyment: and that if any thing desirable be withheld from them, they are treated with injustice, and not according to their deservings. Hence necessarily springs a Discontented Spirit. Puffed up with such high thoughts of themselves, they are never contented with what they have. Their arrogant pretensions are never satisfied. Enough, in their opinion, is never done for them. That *they* should want such a convenience, or be denied such a request, or be forced to submit to such a hardship, wounds their pride, and renders them dissatisfied. 'Is it 'becoming,' they say to themselves, 'that 'we should be treated thus? Why should 'we be used in a manner so unworthy of

'us? Why are not our claims regarded? 'Why are we not dealt with more suitably to 'our deserts?'

Now Christianity effectually removes this cause of discontent. It takes away our pride. Humility is the first lesson which a man learns in the school of Christ: and when once this grace is attained, a great step is made towards contentedness of mind. The true Christian (and it is of such a Christian only that I speak) has been deeply humbled. He has been convinced that he is a sinner; and with that conviction, all his high thoughts of himself have been overthrown. He has seen himself before God, stript of every plea, and deserving only of wrath and punishment. What then is become of his arrogant pretensions, his meritorious claims. He now sees, that as a sinner he has justly forfeited his claim to every blessing; that far from having been treated *worse* than he deserves, he has been treated far better. Let his comforts be ever so few, he feels that they are more than he has any right to expect. Let his sufferings be ever so great, he is conscious that they are less than his iniquities have deserved. What ground, then, is left for discontent? What cause remains for repining and complaint? 'None, none (he

'cries); I am not dealt with according to my 'demerits. Though I be crossed in my 'wishes; though I suffer some inconve-'niences; though I endure some hardships, 'yet I am a sinner. I deserve all this, and 'worse. Far then from being dissatisfied, I 'have great reason to be thankful that so 'many mercies are yet continued to me.'

Another cause of discontent is self-preference; an undue and immoderate love of ourselves. This disposition also is common to us. We naturally love ourselves with an excessive fondness: and this partiality as naturally leads to discontent. Under the influence of this extravagant passion, we look upon our own concerns as those of the greatest moment, in comparison of which all others are of no value. Our own interests are to be served; our own happiness is to be consulted; our own wishes are to be gratified. Self is ever uppermost in our minds. But, so long as this is the case, how impossible it is that we should not be discontented. For while we see others possessing advantages which we possess not; or free from troubles which we experience, how naturally do we conceive envy in our hearts: and comparing our lot with theirs, grow impatient and dissatisfied. 'See (we are ready 'to exclaim) how happy others are! They

'have none of the sorrows which we have. 'They have a thousand comforts which we 'have not. How hard is our lot! Why is it 'not like theirs? Why should they have 'more enjoyments, and fewer sufferings, than 'we have? If all persons were as much op-'pressed and troubled as we are, our lot 'would more easily be borne. But to see 'others in a situation so much better than 'ourselves, is provoking and intolerable.'

But for this evil also Christianity brings a cure. It takes away this cause of discontent. It regulates this self-love. It checks our immoderate attention to our own ease, comfort, and enjoyment. It teaches us, "not to look every one at our own things *only*, but at the things of others" also; to consult their interests and their happiness, at least, equally with our own. Christianity teaches us, in imitation of our divine Master, not to please ourselves, but to please our neighbours; to love them as we love ourselves: for their sake to deny ourselves, and submit to inconveniences; to have a fellow-feeling in what befalls them; to rejoice when they rejoice; and to be as glad at their prosperity and success as at our own. This is the heavenly temper of love which Christianity enjoins; and which it inspires and maintains in those who truly believe: and where this temper

prevails, how great a cause of discontent is taken away! Those who love their neighbour as themselves, cannot repine at his lot being better than their own. Those who in fact rejoice at his prosperity, cannot be troubled at it. Where such Christian love prevails, this ground of discontent cannot remain.

A third cause of discontent is covetousness. Men are naturally covetous. They have naturally a strong desire after the things of this world: and a desire which never is satisfied. The more they have, the more they crave. Let them have ever so much, still something else is wanted; and so long as this is the case, they are dissatisfied. Ahab, amidst all his treasures and palaces, was discontented because Naboth's vineyard was denied him. And how often does it happen, that a man takes no enjoyment in the many possessions which he has, because he is not able to procure this house, or that piece of land, or some other object, for which he inordinately longs?—But here also Christianity brings a cure. It teaches us, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." * It reveals to us far more valuable riches than this world can give. It draws

* Luke, xii. 15.

off our affections from earthly things, and leads us to fix them on things above: and in thus taking away our immoderate love of the world, it takes away a great cause of discontent. Why should the Christian be dissatisfied that he has so little of this world, when this world is not his treasure? 'My 'treasure (he cries) is in heaven. *There* I 'look for an enduring substance. Whether 'my portion here be great or small, is a 'matter of little consequence. This estate 'indeed might suit my convenience. That 'house might add to my comfort. But I 'covet them not. My happiness does not 'depend on these things. I am not unhappy 'because I cannot procure them. I have 'better things in store. I have an inherit-'ance reserved for me, incorruptible and 'undefiled: "an house not made with 'hands, eternal in the heavens."' Where such is the language of the heart, such its moderation with respect to worldly things, what room is left for discontent?

But while Christianity thus takes away the natural causes of discontent,

II. It also furnishes very powerful motives for the exercise of a contented mind.

In the first place, the disciples of Christ are under the strongest obligations to walk in the footsteps of their divine Master. It is

their profession to follow the example of their Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him. They are taught to look forward to their perfect renewal to his image, as the completion of their happiness in heaven: and though on earth they must ever fall far short of a perfect likeness to him, yet even here, it is their duty, their privilege, and their desire, to have that mind which was in Christ Jesus, and to show forth in their lives, a faint resemblance at least, of those heavenly dispositions which shone so bright in him. Among these, contentedness of mind was very conspicuous. No person could have greater provocations to discontent than the blessed Jesus had. His whole life was a continued succession of labour, fatigue, and mortification. He was so poor, that, as he tells us himself, "He had not where to lay his head." He was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."* He was falsely accused, unjustly condemned, and treated with such indignity, as to see even a robber and a murderer preferred before him. Yet where do we find in his conduct, or in his words, any expression or sentiment of discontent? He bore all his sufferings with meekness and patience. He manifested, at

* Matt. viii. 20. — Isaiah, liii. 3.

all times, an entire submission to the will of his heavenly Father. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." In the most trying scene of his sufferings, he betrayed nothing of a murmuring, repining spirit. Here, then, his true Disciples see a perfect pattern of what they themselves ought to be; and hence, also, are they stirred up to imitate it. Can they be the followers of Jesus Christ, and yet allow themselves to be discontented? Did he endure so much for them, and endure it all with so much patience; and shall they murmur at their comparatively light afflictions? Shall they repine at being poor or despised, or unjustly treated, when He suffered poverty, contempt, and injustice, for their sakes? No: they have not so been taught the truth, as it is in Jesus. They will take his yoke, and learn of him. They will bear their cross, and follow him.

Besides, in the second place, true Christians are firmly convinced, that their lot, whatever it may be, is the *lot* chosen for them by their blessed Lord and Master. They know that the hairs of their head are all numbered; that nothing happens to them by chance; that every thing which befalls them is ordered and appointed by that Saviour, who once bled on the cross, but

now hath all power in heaven and in earth. Christ is their King and Master: as such they are bound to obey and serve Him: to do his will, and to submit to his government, this is what they are required to do; yea, what they wish to do, and have pleasure in doing. Can they be discontented with their lot? Can they be dissatisfied with what their King and Master orders for them? Far otherwise are their thoughts. What they say to themselves is this: 'Though our 'lot be not so easy as that of many others; 'though we may be exposed to many hard-'ships, and deprived of many comforts; 'yet still our lot is that which Jesus Christ 'has chosen for us. He sends us indeed 'some difficulties. He withholds from us 'some enjoyments. But has He not a right 'to do what He will with his own? Shall 'our eye be evil, because He is good? He 'has a right to dispose of us as He sees fit; 'for he has bought us with a price, even 'with his own blood. He has a right to 'give and take away, according to his will: 'and his will shall be ours. What He 'gives, we will thankfully receive. What He 'takes away, we will readily part with. 'What He denies, we will not desire to 'have. What He lays on us, we will pa-'tiently bear. Submission, *cheerful* sub-

'mission to his will, is our duty and our 'happiness. Thus "every where, and in 'all things, we are instructed both to be 'full and to be hungry, both to abound and 'to suffer need."'

But farther, while true Christians know that their lot, be it what it may, is chosen for them by Jesus Christ, they also know that it is *chosen* for them, *in infinite love and mercy to their souls.* He knows what is best for his poople, and will order every thing for their spiritual and everlasting good. He hath to this end vouchsafed to them a most gracious promise, "that all things shall work together for their good." Thus they feel convinced, that in whatsoever state they are, it is the one which is really best for them. What a powerful motive is thus furnished for the exercise of a contented mind! With such a conviction, how can the real Christian be otherwise than contented, whatever may befall him? 'What ground (he 'asks) have I for being dissatisfied? My 'desire and aim is, so to pass through things 'temporal, that I finally lose not the things 'eternal. Now what state, or what circum-'stances, may in this view be best for 'me, I know not: but Christ my Saviour 'knows, and will lead me into them. Does 'he disappoint my worldly hopes? He sees

'that disappointment will be good for me. 'Does he call me to trials? He sees that 'trials are necessary for me. Does he take 'away my worldly comforts? He sees that 'they would prove hurtful to me. Does 'he make my way rough, difficult, and 'thorny? He sees that it is the way in 'which it is safest for me to walk. Far then 'from being discontented and repining, I 'have reason to be thankful and to rejoice. 'I have reason to cry out with the Apostle, '"in whatsoever state I am, I have learned 'therewith to be content:" for I know it 'to be that state in which my best interests 'will be most effectually promoted and 'secured.'

The practical uses which I shall make of the Truth, thus explained and enforced, are two.

1. I shall employ it for correcting an error which is prevalent in the world. Persons, who know nothing of the power of Religion themselves, are apt to form strange and mistaken notions respecting it. They regard and represent it as making men dull and melancholy; as destroying cheerfulness, spoiling present enjoyment, and casting over the mind nothing but gloom and darkness. But I would seriously ask such persons, on what reasonable grounds they can build or

support these charges? I would seriously ask them whether the truth, which we have been considering, does not give a very opposite view of the subject? With what justice can it be said of religion, that it makes men dull and melancholy, destroys cheerfulness, spoils enjoyment, and casts gloom and darkness over the mind; when we see that its natural tendency is to do the very reverse; to provide a remedy for the most tormenting evils of the human heart, and to spread over the soul, peace, serenity, and happiness? Look at the proud, the selfish, or the covetous man, and see what a miserable being he is. Tossed by tumultuous passions, he is "like the troubled sea, which cannot rest." Never pleased, never satisfied, never contented, what can he know of inward peace? Compare the disturbed and agitated state of his mind with the calm and tranquil feelings expressed by the Apostle in the text, and judge whether Religion really makes men unhappy. If you allow, as all must do, that a "Contented mind is a continual feast," surely you must also allow, that the same thing, which in the highest degree promotes and increases true contentment, cannot be destructive to happiness. Cease then to make assertions in support of which you cannot offer any solid argument; asser-

tions, which facts and experience daily contradict. Cease to expose the ignorance, cease to betray the malignity of the carnal mind, by ascribing to Religion effects which it never did, which it never can produce; and which your own conscience, if fairly consulted, will tell you that it never does produce. Rather seek yourselves to become *really* religious: so shall you know, by your own experience, the falsehood and injustice of your charges. Instead of speaking evil of religion, make trial of her ways, and you shall find them "ways of pleasantness and peace."

2. I would take occasion, from the Truth before us, to stir up real Christians to a more faithful and diligent improvement of their privileges. It sometimes happens, that persons who own and feel the power of religion, and, on the whole, live under its influence, yet are far from showing the same mind and temper with St. Paul in the text. When disappointed or afflicted, they betray a repining and an impatient spirit; and prove occasionally, at least, that they have not as yet learned, in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content. Now whence does this arise? It is not that Religion is unable to do for them what it did for the Apostle. It is not that Religion cannot,

every where and in all things, instruct them, as it instructed him, both to be full and to be hungry, "both to abound and to suffer need." But the fact is, they do not give themselves up to Religion so decidedly as St. Paul did. They do not suffer Religion to produce in them all those effects which it produced in the Apostle; and which, if permitted, it would produce in them. Sin is not mortified to so great an extent as it might be. Pride, self-preference, and covetousness, are not broken and weakened as they should be. Christian principles are not kept in so lively exercise as they ought to be. Hence it comes to pass, that at times the flesh gets the better of the spirit, and a discontented temper prevails. But, my brethren, this ought not to be. Let me earnestly exhort such of you as answer this description, to know your privileges better, and to turn them to a better account. Let Religion have a more decided influence on your heart. Call forth your principles into more lively exercise. Lay the axe to the root of all your evil and selfish inclinations. By failing to do this so resolutely and effectually as you might, you are depriving yourselves of much solid peace and comfort; and are keeping back from Religion much of that credit and honour, which she ex-

pects at your hands; and which it is your duty to reflect on her. Awake, then, from this injurious and disgraceful slumber. Trim your lamps. Study more deeply in the School of Christ; and in your lives show forth more clearly the praises of Him, "who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

SERMON XIV.

JESUS ENDURING THE CROSS AND DESPISING THE SHAME.

HEBREWS, xii. 2.

Who, for the Joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame.

IF we should see a person undergoing very severe trials, and bearing the most unprovoked indignities with fortitude, meekness, and constancy; we should be filled with high admiration of his character. But if we should discover, that we ourselves had a *personal concern* in his sufferings; that he was undergoing them on *our* account, from the most generous motive, in order to save us from some heavy calamity, or to procure for us some unexpected good; our admiration would be heightened into gratitude; not without some mixture of regret and self-reproach, that we were the occasion of so much suffering. — Such are the feelings, though in the highest possible degree, which

the sight of Christ crucified ought to excite in us. We should regard it with the most admiring gratitude, and the deepest self-condemnation. God grant! that these feelings may be stirred up and strengthened in us, while I discourse to you on the passage in the text: "Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." I need not tell you that it is Jesus Christ, of whom the Apostle here speaks. All who hear the words, will readily apply them to Him. Therefore, without farther preface, I shall lead you to consider three things, as they are set before us in the text.

I. *What* Jesus Christ suffered.
II. *How* He suffered.
III. *Why* He suffered thus.

I. We read in the text, that Jesus Christ suffered the *Cross* and the *Shame*. Our Saviour's life, from the Stable to the Grave, was a life of suffering. But that which completed and filled up the whole was the Cross. It was the last and bitterest part of that cup which He undertook to drink. It was the lowest, deepest point of degradation to which He was abased. Hence in that description of his wonderful humiliation in the second chapter of the Philippians,

it is said, that "being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross.*" That *He*, who was "in the Form of God," having taken on him "the Form of a servant," should so humble Himself as to become obedient unto death, was truly wonderful; but that this death should be *even the death of the cross*, was astonishing indeed. There is great force in the expression, "*even* the death of the Cross;" which shows, that there were some circumstances in that death which were peculiar to itself, and which made it beyond every other death, dreadful and degrading. Let us see what these circumstances were.

In the first place, it was the most *painful* of deaths. It subjected the sufferer to excessive pain and torture. This was so well known, that the Romans derived from this very punishment, the word which in their language expressed the greatest degree of pain: and we, borrowing the word from them, call such a pain an *excruciating* pain; that is, a pain like that which was felt on the cross. Nor have we any word in our language, more descriptive of violent agony, than this. Nay, so dreadful was the pain of dying on the cross, that it was accounted a peculiar act of mercy in the judge to per-

mit the Criminal to be killed, before his body should be crucified. Indeed, the very nature of the punishment shows how excessive must have been the pain attending it. That the hands and feet, which being full of nerves, are some of the most feeling parts of the human body, should be pierced through, and fastened to the wood with iron spikes: that then, by the sudden raising up of the Cross, and the fixing of the foot of it in the earth, the whole weight of the body should be thrown upon these torn and tender parts; how dreadful must have been the sufferings! How exquisite the torture! Add to which, the death of the Cross was a slow, a tedious, a lingering death. The pain, great as it was, did not quickly put an end to the life; and so by its own violence deliver the sufferer from misery. It destroyed him by degrees. It tortured, without immediately killing him. No vital part was touched. The crucified person was left to live under all this torment, till, through anguish, loss of blood, fatigue, and famine, his natural strength was quite worn out, and his heart ceased to beat. You may remember, that when Jesus had hung for six hours on the Cross, Pilate *marvelled* that he were dead already: and the two Thieves, who were crucified with him, were both yet alive,

when the soldiers came to take down their bodies from the cross in the evening of the day on which they had been executed. On the whole, we cannot well conceive a death more painful than the death of the cross; or one which the most ingenious cruelty could have invented more suited to its purpose.

In the second place, it was the most *shameful* of deaths. Any death by the hand of the public executioner is shameful. It is always intended to bring disgrace on those who suffer it. But we can hardly have any just conception of the degree of infamy which was attached to the death of the cross. We must indeed be sensible that the very circumstance of being publicly hung up as a criminal, exposed to the eye of every beholder, and having the crime, for which this punishment was supposed to be inflicted, written in large letters on the top of the cross, was in itself very ignominious. But it was the general opinion in which this punishment was held, that stamped on it the deepest ignominy. It was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment; one, however, which was deemed too infamous for any Roman citizen ever to suffer. It was inflicted only on the lowest and vilest of mankind; on slaves, and notorious criminals; on such

as were accounted the pests and outcasts of society, a disgrace to human nature, and unworthy to be treated like human beings.— These were the persons for whom, by the Roman law, this punishment was reserved. And hence we may judge in what light it was generally regarded, and how great was the infamy attached to it. As a fact also, which farther proves and clears this point, it may be added, that it was not uncommon to take even the dead bodies of criminals, who had not fallen alive into the hands of public justice, and to hang these upon the cross, as the way of expressing the greatest detestation and contempt of their character, and of branding their memory with disgrace and ignominy. And it was for this reason: for the shame and infamy which this death brought with it, as much as for the pain and torture which it inflicted, that the Jews were so clamorous for Jesus to be crucified. They not only designed, by putting Him to this slow and painful death, to gratify their malice and cruelty; but they intended also, by the infliction of this punishment, to sink and degrade Him to the very lowest depth of debasement; to rank Him with the worst and vilest of mankind; to set Him forth to the nation, and to the world, as an object of universal detestation and scorn;

and to make his very name infamous and accursed.

Such were the general circumstances which distinguished the death of the cross from every other death, and made it beyond all others dreadful and degrading. But in addition to these, there were in the case of Jesus some particular circumstances, which increased and aggravated both the usual pain and shame of crucifixion. As if the pain of the cross were not of itself sufficient to glut the vengeance of his enemies, they beat and buffeted him, and tore his back with scourges, before they led him to be crucified. They made a crown of thorns, and fixed it on his head, by driving the points into his bleeding temples. They next forced him, though exhausted by these cruelties, to carry to the place of execution, one end at least of the heavy cross, to which he was to be nailed; and when arrived at the fatal spot, instead of giving to him, as was frequently the case with others, a cordial draught, which might support the spirits, or deaden the sense of feeling, they offered to him vinegar mingled with gall; which was so offensive, that even fainting and parched with thirst, as he must have been, he refused to drink it.

Again, as if the common shame and ignominy of crucifixion were not sufficient to express the infamy, with which his enemies wished to load him; they preferred before Him Barabbas, a notorious robber, who for sedition and murder had been cast into prison; demanding that he might be released, and Jesus crucified. Then to show more pointedly the light in which they wished to represent him, they executed him in company with two malefactors; placing him in the midst, as being in their judgement the worst and vilest of the three. Next, in derision, they placed this writing over his head; "Jesus, the King of the Jews:" by which they meant, in the most insulting manner, to scoff at his pretensions to that title. Here, then, we might have supposed that malice would have ceased its efforts; that if pity had not touched the breast at the sight of so much misery, yet, that invention itself would have been worn out. But, no: farther ignominy still awaited the wretched sufferer. While hanging in this dreadful torment, he was yet to encounter farther indignities: to listen to every reproachful taunt, which scorn and passion could cast forth upon him. The soldiers, who had nailed him to the cross, mocked him,

laughed at his sufferings, and derided his cries. The people who passed by, railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ah! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross." One, at least, of the thieves who were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Nay, the scribes and elders, the rulers and the priests, even the chief priests themselves, were so forgetful of what became their rank and character, as to take a part in this inhuman scene, and to join in reviling Jesus, and in putting Him to shame. "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see, and believe."

Such was the death which Jesus died. Such were the cross and the shame, which He suffered. But *how* did he suffer them? This was the second thing to be considered.

II. "He endured the cross, despising the shame." This expression of *enduring* the cross, means something more than merely bearing it, and undergoing the pain. It is descriptive of the *manner* in which he bore it. It implies that he bore it with fortitude, with meekness, with patience. He *endured* it. He neither shrunk from it, nor

sunk under it. He met it with boldness. He went through it with constancy. The whole account of his sufferings justify us in putting this meaning on the word *endure*. Though He knew clearly before-hand, the bloody baptism which awaited Him; He yet described himself as "*straitened* till it were accomplished." When the time drew near, far from seeking to avoid the cross, He "*stedfastly* set his face to go up to Jerusalem." * When the hour was come, though He could have had twelve legions of angels to assist Him, yet he made no resistance, but yielded himself up into the hands of his enemies. Throughout the trying scene which followed, he showed no fear, no impatience, no unwillingness, to finish what he had begun. "He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair. He hid not his face from shame and spitting." "Brought as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth." † He made no complaint, uttered no lamentation. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. All was composure, dignity, self-possession, and greatness of mind. He felt for others, but he felt not for himself. "Daughters of Jerusalem,"

* Luke, xii. 50. — ix. 51.

† Isaiah, l. 6. — liii. 7.

(said He to the woman who followed Him to Calvary) "weep not for me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children." "Father!" (He exclaimed in behalf of the soldiers who were nailing him to the cross,) "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Nay, while he was hanging in all the agony of crucifixion, He yet affectionately remembered and noticed his afflicted Mother, and recommended her to the care of his beloved Disciple.* In this manner He *endured* the Cross.

He also "*despised* the Shame." Shame and infamy are evils, which it is often found more difficult to bear, than even pain and torture. Many persons who would endure great bodily suffering without shrinking, dread the very thought of disgrace and ignominy. Their bodies may sustain the former, but their minds cannot support the latter. Here their strength is tried, and fails. Here their weakness is discovered. They sink under this weight. Not so it was with Jesus. He *despised* the shame. All the indignities which his enemies endeavoured to heap on him, could not alter his purpose, nor shake his firmness. In his patience He possessed his soul. He was unmoved by all the scorn, contempt, and ridicule which was

* Luke, xxiii. 28—34. —— John, xix. 26, 27.

expressed against him: by all the falsehoods, calumnies, and reproaches, which were cast upon him. *He looked down upon them*, as the word properly signifies. He regarded them as beneath his notice: as things which did not deserve a thought, in comparison with the great object which he had in view.

What this object was, I now proceed to show. It is the third thing which the text leads us to consider.

III. *Why* Jesus Christ suffered thus.

It must be plain, when Jesus thus "endured the cross, despising the shame," that he had some object in view; that there was some end, which he hoped to attain by his sufferings; some reward, which he proposed to himself, as a full compensation for all this pain and shame. So speaks the text. It tells us that it was for the Joy which was set before him. And what was this Joy? The question may be readily answered. It was the Joy of saving sinners; the Joy of delivering innumerable souls from the bondage of Sin and Satan, and of bringing them to everlasting happiness. He saw the miserable state into which sin had plunged the race of Adam, and was touched with pity for them. He saw that they had no power of delivering themselves out of their lost condition; that

they could do nothing to atone for their guilt, and to make their peace with God; and that if left to themselves, they must for ever suffer the dreadful punishments which their sins deserved. He saw these things; but at the same time he knew, that what they could not do for themselves, he could do for them. He knew that by his sufferings and obedience unto death, the death of the cross, he could make a full and perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He knew that the Father would graciously accept this sacrifice, and for the sake of this satisfaction, would pardon Sinners, and receive them to his favour. Here then we see, *Why* Jesus suffered thus. We discover the object which he had in view. He looked forward to the *consequences* of his suffering. He foresaw the blessed effects which would follow it. He foresaw that by *His* stripes *we* should be healed; that by the pain which *He* endured, *we* should be saved from eternal pain; that by the shame to which *He* submitted, *we* should be saved from everlasting shame, and raised to high and endless glory. He looked forward to that day, when the "Ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs;" when that great multitude, whom no man can number,

having washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb, shall "be presented by Him faultless, before the presence of his Father, with exceeding joy." This was the reward which He proposed to himself. This was the end, for the attainment of which, He bled, and suffered, and died. This was "the joy set before Him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame."

What, my brethren, shall we say to these things? What are the thoughts, the feelings, which this subject raises in us? Can we reflect on the *Sufferings* of Christ; on his cross and passion; on his pain and shame: can we think on the *Manner* in which he bore these sufferings; on the fortitude, the meekness, the patience, the constancy which He showed throughout; and not be filled with the deepest admiration of his exalted character? But when we farther reflect on the *Cause* of his suffering; when we call to mind the *Object* for which He suffered; when we consider, that for *us* men, and for *our* salvation, He underwent these things; that to save us from hell, which we had deserved, and to raise us to heaven, which we had forfeited, He "endured the cross, despising the shame;" what then are our feelings? Are we not filled with the most lively gratitude, as well as with the deepest admir-

ation? While we admire his fortitude and constancy, are we not also sensibly touched with the thoughts of his goodness and compassion? Do we not feel something of our immense obligations to him? Are we not ready to say, "Behold how he loved us?" What would have been our condition, if He had not "endured the Cross, despising the shame?" How lost and desperate! Without Christ, without hope, without God in the world, we must have miserably perished. But now, how changed, how happy, how glorious is our state! Christ "hath once suffered for sins, the *Just*; for the *unjust*, that he might bring us to God."* By the blood of his Cross, He has made our peace with Heaven. We, who were afar off, are now brought nigh; and can draw near to God, in the full assurance of hope. "Let our souls bless the Lord, and all that is within us bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O! our souls; and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all our iniquities; who healeth all our diseases; who redeemeth our life from destruction; who crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift!"

But is there not also another feeling excited by this subject? While we read of the

* 1 Peter, iii. 18.

sufferings of Jesus; while we think of his wonderful compassion, of his amazing love; which led him, for our sakes, to "endure the cross, despising the shame;" are we not touched with something like remorse and self-reproach? Are we not concerned at the recollection of our sins, which helped to cause these sufferings? Are we not concerned to think of the little return which we have made to Jesus for all his love? He died that we might live; yet we have not lived to Him. He remembered us in our low estate; yet we have forgotten Him. He thought of us; yet days, and weeks, and years, have we lived without thinking of Him. He "endured the cross" for us; yet we have been backward to take up our cross for Him. Every little trial to which He has put us, we have accounted a heavy burden, and hard to be endured. He, for us, "despised the shame;" yet we have been unwilling to suffer shame for Him. Every little indignity to which He has called us to submit, we have counted an intolerable hardship; and perhaps to avoid the shame, have in fact denied our Saviour. Do not the thoughts of these things grieve us? Do we not feel sorrow and shame? Are we not angry with ourselves? Are we not self-condemned?

Let these humbling views of ourselves be cherished and increased. They will lower our self-esteem, and exhalt the Saviour in our hearts. Let us be confounded at the sight of our great unworthiness, contrasted with his glorious perfections. So shall we learn to walk more humbly and more closely with Him. So shall we learn to live no longer to ourselves, but to Him who loved us, and gave himself for us.

SERMON XV.

THE OBJECT AND EFFECT OF CHRISTIAN HOPE.

1 JOHN, iii. 3.

And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.

HOPE is the main spring of human actions, and the great cordial of human sorrows. Take away hope, and human life would be a dull and miserable blank. Equally necessary is hope to the *Christian* Life: nay, so necessary, that it is called "*the Helmet of Salvation:*" and we are even said to be "*saved by hope.*"* Christian Hope, however, like every other Christian Grace, has its counterfeit. There is a vain, as well as a good hope. While we read of the hope, that "maketh not ashamed," we also hear of "the hope of the hypocrite, that shall perish." And many persons talk loudly of their Christian Hopes, who, it is to

* Ephes. vi. 17. — 1 Thess. v. 8. — Rom. viii. 14.

be feared, have little pretensions to the character of Christians.

It is of great importance, then, to enquire into this matter; to see what true Christian Hope really is, and how it differs from every other thing, which takes to itself the name. There is indeed something peculiar in the *Foundation* of Christian hope: for it is built altogether on Jesus Christ. There can be no true Hope, but what springs from a knowledge of Jesus Christ; for it is only on his Sacrifice and intercession for Sinners, and on the Promises given in Him, that we can have any confidence towards God, and consequently any true and solid Hope. Hence He is called "our Hope," and "Christ in us the Hope of Glory:" and in this respect, "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." * Here then should our first enquiries be made, On what is our Hope placed? Is it placed on Jesus Christ, and on Him alone; on his Merits and Mediation, and on the Promises of God in Him? Or are we building on some other foundation, or joining some other foundation with Him? Are we placing our Hope on something in ourselves, on our own works, merits, or resolutions? Are we placing it on any outward thing, on our

* 1 Tim. i. 1. — Col. i. 27. — 1 Cor. iii. 21.

privileges or professions? In this case we need go no farther in the business. It is clear, in the very beginning of our enquiries, that our Hope is not a true Scriptural Hope, for it is not founded on Jesus Christ. — But, on the other hand, it is not every Hope, which pretends and appears to be built on Jesus Christ, that is really a good Hope. There are other marks by which it must be distinguished. There are other particulars which must accompany it, in order to prove its title to a true Scriptural Hope. In this view the Text may be consulted with great advantage. The Apostle is speaking of Christian Hope; and his words are these, that "Every man who has this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." From which passage we may collect two things respecting Christian Hope, which serve clearly to distinguish it from every other hope. These are,

I. Its Object, what it looks to.

II. Its Effect; what it leads men to do.

These two points I shall endeavour to explain. And may the Lord so bless the endeavour, that it may be profitable to our souls!

I. Hope must always have some object in view. It must be looking to something. This is necessary to the very being of Hope:

for without this there could be no hope. The very idea of Hope means the having in view, something, which we desire to gain, and which, when gained, we suppose, will add to our happiness. The worldly man desires to gain money, or ease, or power, or a great name. These are the *Objects* of his hope; the things, to which he looks for happiness. The Christian has also an *Object* in view: something, to which he is looking to make him happy. What this is, I shall proceed to show.

St. John calls the hope, of which he is speaking, *this* hope. "Every man that has *this* hope:" a way of speaking which plainly points at something that had gone before, and shows that the Apostle had been saying something about Christian Hope, besides what he says in the text. Let us see what this was. We find him at the beginning of this chapter, breaking out into admiration of the wonderful Love of God, in having brought such sinners, as men, into his favour and family. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God!" This leads him to speak of the great Blessedness of true Christians. "The world (indeed) knoweth them not, because it knew him not." It neither values, nor

sees their worth and privileges. But, adds the Apostle, even "*now* are we the sons of God." True Christians are *now* the special objects of his fatherly love and care. They are His Children; and if children, then heirs. There is a glorious inheritance provided for them. What this inheritance will be, they do not at present exactly know. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Enough, however, is certainly revealed to raise their thoughts, and to stir up their desires. "This we know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is." And then follow the words of the text, "And every man that has *this* Hope." What hope then does the Apostle mean? The hope, doubtless, of which he had been speaking: the Hope of being like Christ at his appearing. This is the Christian's hope. This is the *Object* which he has in view; the thing, to which he is looking for happiness. Let us see what there is in this Object, which distinguishes the hope of the Christian from every other hope.

The being like Christ, at his appearing, may signify, in the first place, the being like Him as to the *outward* form. It may relate to the state of the *body*, when it shall be raised from the dead. Great and glorious

will be the change, which, at the Day of Resurrection, will take place in the body of the Christian. "It was sown in corruption, it will be raised in incorruption. It was sown in dishonour, it will be raised in glory. It was sown in weakness, it will be raised in power; it was sown a natural body, it will be raised a spiritual body." It will be a glorious body, fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; no longer subject to pain and sickness, to decay and death; but fitted for the heavenly and eternal state for which it is designed. And this is, doubtless, a part of the Christian's Hope. He looks forward with joyful expectation, to the time, when death shall be swallowed up in victory; when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; when he shall no longer "groan in this tabernacle, being burdened, but shall be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven."

But this explanation of the passage, however true and important in itself, is far from being the only, or the chief thing here intended. The being like Christ at his appearing signifies, in the second place, the being like him as to the *inward man*. It relates to the state of the *soul* at the day of Christ's appearing. As the body of the

Christian will in that day be all glorious without, so his soul will be all glorious within: for in that day it will be perfectly "conformed to the Image of the Son." — When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, "for we shall see Him as He is." — Christians now see something of Christ, but they see Him *not as He is.* They see Him through a glass darkly. They see Him by faith, but not by sight. Yet even now, a very surprising effect is produced on their souls, by merely this imperfect view of Christ. Even now, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory." * Even here they bear some traces, however faint, of the Divine Likeness. What then shall be the case, when they shall see Christ far otherwise than they now see Him? when the veil which now dims their sight shall be taken away; when they shall "see Him as He is," in all the splendour and majesty of his glorious person? The transforming power of his presence will then be instantly and universally felt: all the remaining pollution of sin and infirmity will be done away for ever. The dross of sensual affection will at once be consumed before the brightness of his coming. The

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

soul, seeing face to face, Him, whom she so ardently loves, will reflect nothing but His pure and glorious image. Every spot and wrinkle, which have hitherto defaced her, will disappear. She will be holy and without blemish; all beautiful, all glorious within. Such will be the state of the soul at Christ's appearing: and such then is now the great *Object* of the Christian's Hope. He longs to be like Christ. He longs to be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit. He feels and laments the corruption of his nature; and therefore he looks forward with earnest expectation, to the time when this corruption shall be done away; when the Victory over the flesh shall be complete, when he shall appear with Christ in glory; and, "awaking up with His likeness, shall be satisfied with it."

We see, then, what there is in the Object of the Christian's Hope, which distinguishes this Hope from every other thing, which takes to itself the name. It is not merely a hope of happiness, without any idea of what that happiness will be. It is not merely a hope of being with Christ, and of seeing His glory. It is not merely a hope of going to Heaven, and of living in the presence of God. It is a hope, which while it contains all these things,

has still a clearer and more precise object in view. It is a Hope of Holiness: a Hope of being perfectly holy, that *so* we may be perfectly happy: a Hope of seeing Christ "as He is;" that by this sight of Him, we may be made like Him; and *thus* may become fitted for going to Heaven, and for living with God in glory.

And now, my brethren, let us ask ourselves, Is this our Hope? Has our Hope this Object? Is this the thing which we have in view: the thing to which we are looking for happiness? Do we hope to be like Christ, that we may be qualified for living with Him, and capable of enjoying that happiness, which he has provided for us? Let us examine ourselves strictly on this point. Let us search, and see what our Hope is. If Holiness be not a grand part of its *Object*, our hope is certainly not the Hope of the Christian.

To assist us in this examination, let us consider the other particular here stated, respecting Christian Hope, namely,

II. Its Effect: what it leads men to do.

As hope has always some Object in view; something to which it looks for happiness; so it always sets a man to seek after that object, and to do what is in his power to obtain it.

There cannot then be a better way of finding out what our Hope is, than by seeing what it leads us to do. If wealth, or power, or honour, be the things which we hope to gain: how will this Hope influence our conduct? What will it lead us to do? It will lead us to use those means which are most likely to make us rich, or great, or honourable. Thus, on the other hand, if Holiness be the object of our Hope, what in this case will our hope lead us to do? It will lead us now to seek after Holiness. We shall be trying to become holy. This will be the *Effect* of our Hope. This is what it will lead us to do. And what is this but the very Effect, which St. John, in the text, declares that Christian Hope *always* produces? "*Every man* that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." It is a general, an universal rule, which admits of no exception. How, indeed, can it be otherwise? If a man really believe, that his happiness hereafter will consist in being like Jesus Christ; if he really look forward to this likeness as the grand Object of his Hope, how can he do otherwise than *now* seek to become like Jesus Christ? How can he do otherwise than now strive to become pure, even as Christ is pure? The future Object of his Hope must have a constant, an active,

a powerful influence on his present conduct. If it have not, nothing can be plainer than that he does not really believe and hope; what he professes to do. If, while he professes to have the Hope of a Christian, he yet willingly continues unholy and impure, and reflects not, nor tries to reflect any part of the Image of Christ, nothing can be plainer than that his professions are vain, and that, at the best, he miserably deceives himself.

But let us more distinctly see what this *Effect*, of which we are speaking, is: what is meant by a *man's purifying himself.* This expression may seem to imply that a man is able to make himself holy, to cleanse his own heart, to sanctify his own nature; and so may *appear* to contradict the general doctrine of Scripture, which teaches a very different truth. This doctrine is, that sanctification is God's work, and not man's: that the preparations of the heart are from the Lord: that it is he who cleanseth the heart, by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit; creates in us a new heart; and renews the soul after His own image and likeness. Nor is there any thing in the text which at all opposes this doctrine, or differs from it in the least. We meet with many other expressions of the same kind with that in the text. The Lord

himself says, by His Prophet Ezekiel, "*Make you* a new heart and a new spirit." St. James, in like manner, says, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and *purify your hearts*, ye double-minded;" while St. Paul exhorts us to "*cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." Do we suppose that these passages contradict the general Doctrine stated above? No such thing. The Scriptures cannot disagree with each other. When we meet with texts which, like those just cited, enjoin us to do something, which the general tenor of the Bible tells us that we cannot do; the way in which we must understand such texts is this; we must understand them as enjoining us to use those means which God has appointed for attaining the thing in question, and in the faithful use of which he has promised that we shall attain it. Let us take this way of interpretation in the present instance; and then we shall see how the text is to be understood. "Every man that has this hope, *purifieth himself;*" that is, he does not cleanse, renew, and sanctify his own heart, for that he cannot do; but he uses those means, which God has appointed, for the cleansing, renewing, and sanctifying of the heart; and in the proper use of which, it is promised, that the heart shall be cleansed, renewed, and

sanctified. In virtue of this appointment, in reliance on this promise, he uses these means, and thus *purifies himself.*

Here, then, my brethren, we have another ground for self-examination. Does our hope produce in us *this* effect? Does it lead us thus to purify ourselves? In the first place, do we seek after purity? Do we seek, not only to be outwardly moral, but also to be inwardly holy? Do we think it not merely enough to regulate the conduct, but do we seek also to regulate the *motives* of our conduct: in short, not only to have clean hands, but also to have a pure heart? And while we seek this inward purity, do we faithfully and diligently use the means which God has commanded us to use, in order to attain it? Do we earnestly beseech him to 'cleanse 'our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy 'Spirit?' Do we add to our prayers, watchfulness; do we keep our heart with all diligence; examine with a jealous eye its secret motives; check its first approaches to evil; and carefully guard every door by which sin may enter into it, especially that sin, be it what it may, by which we are most easily beset? Do we avoid, as much as we are able, such places, and persons, and employments, as are most likely to prove temptations to us? Do we faithfully attend on all the or-

dinances of God? Do we use them as means of growing in grace, and humbly expect, in the use of them, to have our spiritual strength increased, and our souls more and more conformed to the divine image and likeness? In a word, do we now live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? while after all our endeavours, do we still lament our little progress in holiness; and grieve, that notwithstanding we daily strive to grow perfect, even as God is perfect, we yet remain so imperfect, are so far short of what we ought to be, and have so little of the mind which was in Christ Jesus?

Such is the *effect* which true Christian hope will have upon us. If what we call our hope does not lead us to do these things, it is not *Christian* hope; and to suppose that it is, is greatly to deceive ourselves. God grant, then, that we may have clear evidence on this point! Grant that we may not cherish a vain confidence, a foolish self-conceit, an arrogant presumption, in the place of that true, solid, humble, heart-purifying hope, which in the end "maketh not ashamed."

Remember, my brethren, in conclusion, how closely Christian hope and Christian holiness are joined together. In fact, they

cannot be separated; nor can we have one, without the other: while they mutually confirm and promote each other. The greater our holiness is, the stronger will be our hope: as, on the other hand, the stronger our hope is, the greater will be our holiness. — May the Lord, by his grace, increase in us both these blessed fruits of his Spirit! May he write his law in our minds, purify us even as Christ is pure, and cause us to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us!

SERMON XVI.

ON THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE DANGER OF GRIEVING HIM.

EPHESIANS, iv. 30.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

THERE are many truths in the Bible, which we could never have known, had not God revealed them to us: Truths, therefore, which are to be received altogether by faith, in a simple reliance on the Divine Word. One of the foremost of these, is the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, or of the subsistence of Three Divine Persons in One undivided Godhead. In stating this doctrine, we use the word *Person*, not because it *exactly* expresses the sense which we intend to convey, but because we have no other word which comes so near to what seems to be the meaning of Scripture. The inspired writers, when speaking of the Father,

of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost, frequently applied to each of them such expressions as are descriptive of a *Person.* They ascribe to each *personal* acts and attributes; and make use of such language as, according to our ideas, can properly be used only of a *Person.* Of this kind is the language of the text: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby," or by whom, "ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." — *Grief* is a *personal* feeling, *Sealing* is a *personal* act. Hence we collect that the Holy Ghost is a *Person:* that although, in some respects, he is one with the Father, and with the Son, in the Unity of the Godhead; yet that, in some other respects, he is distinct and separate from them. We pretend not to explain or comprehend this mystery. We receive it by faith; and humbly adore that God, who has thus graciously revealed himself to us. — With these remarks, arising from the text, I now proceed to a more particular consideration of the passage itself; from which I shall take occasion to point out to you two things.

I. The peculiar office of the Holy Spirit in our salvation.

II. The meaning and importance of the admonition here given respecting him.

I. The Peculiar Office of the Holy Spirit in our Salvation is thus represented in the text. , " He seals us unto the day of Redemption." By the day of Redemption is meant that day in which the people of God will be put into complete possession of all those blessings, which have been purchased for them by the blood of Jesus. At present this is far from being the case. For, though perfectly delivered from the condemnation of the Law, and so far set free from the power of sin, as that it no longer has dominion over them, yet they still groan, being burthened with the remainder of original depravity, and too often " find a law in their members warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin, which is in their members." The time, indeed, is coming, when they will be freed for ever from this bondage of corruption. At death, their deliverance from the power and pollution of sin will be perfected. — But even then their *Redemption* will not be complete. Their bodies will still sleep in the grave, under the dominion of death; so that, in this respect, they will still undergo the consequences of sin. But in due time this tyranny also shall be broken. — " Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed."

It shall be "swallowed up in victory." The Grave shall give back its prisoners. "The Ransomed of the Lord shall return with singing unto Zion." Their bodies shall be raised glorious, and immortal. And in that day their Redemption will be complete. The Day of Redemption, then, is the Day of Resurrection: that day, when the manifestation of the Sons of God shall take place: when those that sleep in Jesus shall awake to everlasting glory, shall be publicly owned as His people before the assembled world, shall be cleared from every charge, and admitted into the Joy of their Lord.

This is the Day mentioned in the text: and to seal us unto this day is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit of God. Let us see what this expression means. To seal us to this day is to prepare us, and to set us apart for it; to fix such a mark on us, as in that day shall distinguish us from others, and make it fully appear to whom we belong. When a man sets his seal to a paper, he thereby declares his approbation of it, and acknowledges it to be his own deed. Thus, those, who bear the seal of the Spirit, will be approved by Christ, and acknowledged for his own, in the day of Resurrection. He will set His mark upon them, and will own them for His children. But what then is this mark? What is this impression,

with which the Holy Spirit seals the Children of God? It is the mark, the impression of Himself. It is Holiness. A seal stamps its own image on the wax. And what image does the Holy Spirit stamp on the soul, but the Divine image?—There is another passage in this Epistle to the Ephesians, which both explains and confirms this meaning. "In whom," says the Apostle, speaking of Jesus Christ, "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."* In this passage, which agrees with the text, in ascribing to the Holy Spirit the same office of sealing us unto the Day of Redemption, this seal is said to be the *earnest* of our inheritance. Now an *earnest* is a *pledge* of something to be bestowed, and enjoyed hereafter; nay, it is frequently a *part* of it already bestowed, in order to assure us that, in due time, we shall receive the whole. According to this view, the Seal of the Spirit is a pledge, and part of our future inheritance; a foretaste, as it were, of that happiness which will be enjoyed in heaven. And in what will this happiness chiefly consist, but in being made like unto God, capable of seeing Him, of serv-

* Ephes. i. 13, 14.

ing Him, and of finding pleasure in his service? What, then, is the present earnest and foretaste of heavenly happiness, but a renewal in part, now, to the Divine Image and likeness? What is the pledge of glory hereafter, but Grace here? What is Heaven already begun in the heart, but *Holiness?* And what then is Holiness, but that mark by which the people of God are distinguished, and set apart unto the day of Redemption? They are "a peculiar people;" "new creatures in Jesus Christ." They have been transformed by the renewing of their minds. They have put on the Lord Jesus Christ; they bear His image, and reflect His likeness. Faint, indeed, is their present resemblance to Him; and far short do they *now* fall of that perfection, to which they shall *hereafter* come, But still, a clear, and a broad distinction prevails between their present and their former state, between *their* state and that of others. In their views and principles, in their tempers and affections; in their piety, humility, self-denial, and patient continuance in well-doing; they show that they belong to God, and bear his Image. —Such, then, is the Seal of the Holy Spirit of God; and it is called *His* Seal, because He only is the blessed Agent, in creating the soul anew. No man can sanctify himself. It is utterly out of his power to stamp the

Divine Image on his own heart, and to seal himself unto the Day of Redemption. This is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit alone. He finds the soul when dead in trespasses and sins; and quickens it to newness of life. He convinces it of sin. He teaches it to come to Christ for pardon. He enables it to fight the fight of faith; puts into it holy desires; leads it in the paths of righteousness; reproves it when loitering; recalls it when wandering; revives it when fainting; supports it by divine consolations; sheds abroad in it the love of God; and fills it with peace and joy in believing. "All these things worketh that one and the self-same Spirit;" and thus, by His secret operations on the soul, seals it unto this Day of Redemption. Let us now consider,

II. The Meaning and Importance of the Admonition here given respecting this Divine Person.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." In entering on this subject, it may be necessary to guard against a mistake, into which the expression here used might possibly lead us. When it is said, "*Grieve not the* Holy Spirit," let us not hence suppose, that the Holy Spirit is really capable of suffering grief. God cannot suffer, neither is He

subject to human passions. Whenever expressions, which have this meaning, are in Scripture applied to God; they are so applied merely to suit our apprehensions and capacities. Thus, when it is said in the sixth chapter of Genesis, that "it *repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved* him at the heart:" it is not meant that God really *repented* or *grieved*; for it were impossible that He could do thus. But the meaning is, that men's wickedness was so great and provoking, that God might justly have repented of having made them; that He might reasonably have looked on their incorrigible depravity with grief. Had a *Man* met with the like ingratitude and disappointment, *he* would have repented and grieved. So also in the text, when it is said, "*Grieve* not the Holy Spirit of God," we must understand the admonition to say, — 'Conduct not yourselves towards this Blessed 'and Divine Person, in such a manner as 'might justly give him offence; as might 'reasonably furnish him with a cause of 'Grief.' — Suppose that you had a tender and valuable friend, who was anxious for your welfare, who with unceasing care watched over your interests, and was doing every thing in his power to promote and secure your peace and happiness. Suppose,

that instead of being thankful to this kind friend for his care and watchfulness; instead of listening to his advice, and following his counsels; you should slight his admonitions, should act in a manner directly contrary to his suggestions, and should prefer such company, places, and practices, as he especially warned you to avoid. — What would be the effect of such a conduct on your part? Would you not run the risk of provoking your friend to leave off from advising you, to withdraw his protection from you, and to give you up to the consequences of your folly and perverseness? Would he not justly have reason to be *grieved* at your ingratitude and obstinacy? — Such a friend, as you have seen, is the Holy Spirit of God. Such is his anxiety and watchfulness over your best and highest interests. Such is the tender concern which he feels for your spiritual safety and happiness. Make not, then, such a return to Him for all his kindness, as may subject you to the charge of *grieving* Him. Despise not his admonitions. Turn not a deaf ear to his friendly voice. Provoke Him not, by your evil conduct, to withdraw his influences. "Quench not the Spirit." "Do not despite unto his grace." Such is the meaning of the Admonition. Attend next to the Importance of it.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Why? Because it is by Him that you must be sealed unto the day of Redemption. Recollect what is the gracious part which He takes in your Salvation; and then consider what the consequences of *grieving* Him must be. If a sense of his kindness and love cannot keep you from so great a sin, let a sense of your own danger restrain you. He only can renew your heart unto holiness, and can make you fit for heaven. He can only give you the pledge and earnest of heavenly happiness, and can stamp the Divine Image on your soul. And if this Image be not stamped on your soul, what will become of you? The day of Redemption to others, will be no day of Redemption to you. — While the Ransomed of the Lord, bearing his image, and sealed with his seal, shall in that day lift up their heads with joy, you will awake to everlasting shame and contempt. Wanting the mark which distinguishes the people of God, it will be clear that *you* belong *not* to that blessed company. And to whom will it be clear that you *do* belong? To him, whose likeness you will bear; to him, whom you will resemble in unholiness and sin, and with whom, therefore, you will have your portion for ever

and ever. Such must be the consequence of grieving the Holy Spirit of God. Such must be the just and certain punishment of your perverseness and ingratitude; if you now reject his friendly counsels, and by your disobedience provoke him to leave you to yourself. — Behold, then, the Importance of the Admonition in the text. Your present peace, your eternal happiness, depend on your compliance with it. What more need be said to engage your compliance? It must surely be your desire and resolution not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. In the hope that you thus desire and resolve, I shall point out, by way of application, some things, which directly tend to "grieve Him," and of which, therefore, you will do well scrupulously to beware.

1. Beware of doing any thing which your Conscience, enlightened by the Word of God, forbids you to do. The admonitions of Conscience are the admonitions of the Spirit secretly striving with you. So that to shut your ears against these admonitions, is to shut your ears against the voice of the Spirit. And what more likely way can you take of grieving Him, and provoking Him altogether to withdraw his grace and mercy from you? We read of some who "concerning faith had made shipwreck." And how did

they fall into this apostate condition, but by "having put away a good conscience?"* Beware, then, of resisting this inward Monitor. Does your inclination, does the example or persuasion of others, tempt you to do any thing which your conscience condemns? do it not. Nay, if you have only some doubts whether the thing be lawful or not, still abstain from doing it. For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. However innocently in itself the thing may be done: yet it cannot be done innocently by *you*, so long as you are not clearly convinced in your conscience that it is lawful.

2. Beware of running into temptation. You have seen that it is a great part of the office of the Holy Spirit, in sealing you to the Day of Redemption, to free you from the power and practice of sin. This is the chief design of all his kind reproofs and watchful care. If, then, through carelessness or presumption, you thwart this merciful design, what can you expect, but to displease and anger him? If, by wantonly running into temptation, you show that you make light of that sin, which He accounts so great an evil; if, instead of avoiding such places and companions as will be most

* 1 Tim. i. 19.

likely to stir up the lusts of your heart, you needlessly expose yourself to these dangers: what can you expect, but that your Heavenly Friend, thus slighted and provoked, will gradually forsake you? Eve fell by incautiously suffering her ears to listen to the Tempter's voice, and her eyes to gaze on the forbidden fruit. Peter fell by imprudently venturing into the very place where his courage would be put to the hardest trial. Take warning by these examples. If you copy their misconduct, you will fall like them.

3. Beware of indulging Fleshly Lusts. The Holy Spirit of God is a Spirit of purity: and nothing more effectually grieves Him, than uncleanness and impurity. In this respect, especially, "fleshly lusts war against the soul," for they drive away Him, who is the soul's best Friend. How offensive sensuality and intemperance are to this heavenly Monitor, St. Paul plainly intimates, when he says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit." And again, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the Temple of God, him will God destroy." *

* Ephes. v. 18. — 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

"Abstain," then, my brethren, "from fleshly lusts." "Flee fornication." "Be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." Be pure not only in act, but also in word. "Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient." Nay, farther, indulge not impurity even in the thoughts. "Keep thy heart with all diligence." "Cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

4. Beware of practising Deceit and Falsehood. The Devil was a liar from the beginning, and the Father of lies. To deal in deceit, and to indulge a false tongue, is especially to do his work, and to show ourselves his servants. Whereas the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of Truth." He delights in truth, and abhors falsehood. Every lie, whether spoken or acted, (for we may *act* a lie, as well as *speak* one,) is a sin directly committed against Him. When Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for the daring lie which they had told, St. Peter expressly tells them, that they had "lied to the Holy Ghost:" and that they had "agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord."* A sin, then, which in this instance was thus

* Acts, v. 3—9.

awefully punished, cannot but greatly displease and grieve Him. "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour." Avoid most carefully a practice so odious in itself, so ruinous in its consequences, so gratifying to your worst enemy, so offensive to your best and kindest Friend.

5. Beware of profaning the Lord's Day. This is a Day peculiarly set apart for the glory of God, and the good of your Souls. It is a day, which the Holy Spirit of God more especially employs for carrying on his great and gracious work. It was on this Day, that He came down on the Apostles. It is on this Day, that He is particularly present at His ordinances. He has commanded you to keep this Day holy, and promises that it shall be a blessed Day, to those who keep it thus. — To profane, then, this holy Day; to waste it in idleness, in worldly pleasure, or worldly business; to absent ourselves from the ordinances of God, to lose the benefit of hearing his word; what is the evident tendency of such a conduct, but to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and to drive him from our hearts? And how many, by such a conduct, *do* drive Him from their hearts? How many of those, who die by the hand of the public executioner, date

their ruin from this cause! With heart-felt anguish they look back to their early years, when, by wasting in sin the sacred hours of the Sabbath, they grieved the Spirit of the Lord, and wearied out his patience and long-suffering towards them. — Be admonished by such examples. You, who are young, especially take warning. Keep holy the Sabbath-day. Slight not the ordinances of God. Provoke Him not to say of you, "He is joined to idols, let him alone."

6. Beware of cherishing Evil and Malignant Tempers. The Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of Love. His fruits are meekness, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness. How then can He dwell in that heart where wrath and hatred are suffered to reside? To indulge an angry, unforgiving temper, is expressly said to "give place to the Devil*;" and consequently to offend and grieve the Holy Spirit of God. No sooner does the Apostle deliver the Admonition in the text, but he immediately adds, as in some respect pointing out his meaning: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." Profit, my brethren, by these directions. Cultivate

* Ephes. iv. 26, 27.

mild, peaceable, and charitable dispositions. "Be kind one towards another, tender-hearted." Let the heavenly graces of the Spirit abound in you. So shall He delight over you. So shall He seal you unto the day of Redemption.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE RECIPROCAL DUTIES OF MINISTERS AND PEOPLE.

HEBREWS, xiii. 17.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.

THE Relation, which is formed between a minister of the Gospel, and the People committed to his charge; between him whose office it is to give religious instruction, and those who are concerned to receive it, is highly important. It is a Relation most sacred in itself, and most aweful in its consequences; and the duties which spring from it are such as ought to be well understood by both parties. To this purpose, St. Paul's admonition in the text may be profitably consulted. Speaking to the Christian Converts among the Hebrews, he

reminds them of the respective Duties, which they and their spiritual Pastors mutually owed to each other; as well as of the Obligations, by which they were severally bound to the performance of these Duties. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you."

Taking this passage for our guide, let us first attend to what is here said of the Duty and Obligation of Ministers.

I. The Duty of Ministers to their People is thus described. They "have the rule over them," or, as the word may properly mean, have the *guidance* of them; and "watch for their souls."

Nothing can be clearer, than that God desireth not the death of a sinner; that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. In his great love to the souls of men, he has provided an all-sufficient salvation for them. He has given his only-begotten Son to be their Saviour. He reveals to them these glad tidings in his Written Word, which he has stored with the most precious promises, and most gracious encouragements. But

men are prone to evil. Notwithstanding all that God has done for their salvation, they are prone to neglect their souls, and to forget the One Thing needful. Hence God, to his other Gifts, has mercifully added that of a standing Ministry. He has appointed, in his Church, a succession of Men, whose peculiar Office it should be, to preside over the spiritual concerns of the people committed to their charge: to guide and go before them in heavenly things, not as "having dominion over their faith, but as being helpers of their joy:" to open to them the Scriptures: and so, by putting them in remembrance of the things which belong unto their peace, to stir them up to a suitable and holy practice, and to a greater diligence in making their calling and election sure. Such in general is the Duty of a Minister to his people, as contained under the expression of "having the rule over them." But there is another expression here used, which directs us to go farther into particulars. "They watch for our souls." This expression denotes, that no small degree of diligence, of perseverance, and of anxiety, is necessary for the discharge of the Ministerial Office. At least it implies, that a Minister, in the faithful exercise of his Calling, is required to perform two things.

First, solemnly to admonish the people of their danger. If he see them living in a state of careless unconcern, of presumptuous security, or of fatal self-deception, he must endeavour to awaken them to a sense of their aweful condition. To this end he must reprove, rebuke, exhort. He must affectionately warn them of their error, and of the misery to which it leads. He must faithfully set before them the terrors of the Lord, and the threatenings of Scripture; and show them what will assuredly be the end of those, who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In thus discharging his trust, he may indeed perform a very unpleasant task. He may speak many disagreeable truths, and may run the risk of offending those whom he sincerely loves, and would anxiously endeavour to please. But if he do less than this, can he be truly said to *watch for the souls of his people?* Does he perform the Office of a faithful Watchman, whose business it is to give notice of the approach of an enemy, and to awaken those who are sleeping securely, when danger is at hand? Nay, rather does he not betray his trust, and leave those to perish, whom he should strive to save and rescue?

But farther, he is required,

Secondly, to look out for every convenient

opportunity of doing good to the souls of his people. There are some seasons, at which the mind is more disposed to admit religious impressions than at others. In times of sickness, and under the pressure of affliction, the heart is more likely to be softened, and the conscience to be alarmed. At such seasons the kind attentions of the Minister will, it is probable, be favourably received: and the wholesome truths, which at another time might be heard with impatience, will be listened to with meekness, and sometimes even with pleasure. The minister, then, who *watches for the souls* of his people, must avail himself of such opportunities. He must be forward to meet, and careful to improve them. Nor must he *confine* his endeavours even to such favourable seasons. He must be "instant in season, and out of season." He must teach not only "publicly, but from house to house," "rightly dividing the word of truth," and giving to every one his due proportion of spiritual food.

Such, on the whole, we may gather from the text, to be the Duty of Ministers to their people. Now observe the Obligation which they are under to a faithful performance of their Duty. "They watch for your souls as they that *must give account*." Ministers must give account of their ministry. It is a

Talent committed to their keeping; and their own everlasting happiness or misery depends on the diligence and fidelity with which they improve it. They are, indeed, "Stewards of the mysteries of God." But they are *only* Stewards: and "it is required in Stewards that a man be found faithful." They are shepherds, and have the charge of the flock. But there is a Chief Shepherd, to whom they are answerable for the exercise of that charge. Attend to the following reproof of the Shepherds of Israel, for their carelessness and neglect of the flock; a reproof, to which Christian Pastors, if guilty of like carelessness and neglect, are equally liable. "The diseased have ye not strengthened; neither have ye healed that which was sick; neither have ye bound up that which was broken; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; neither have ye sought that which was lost." — "Therefore, ye Shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field; because there was no shepherd; neither did my shepherd search for my flock; but the Shepherds fed themselves and fed not my flock: Therefore, O ye Shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord

God: Behold, I am against the Shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand." Listen again to the solemn admonition which the Lord addressed to the Prophet Ezekiel; an admonition which may be addressed with equal force to every Minister of the Gospel: "Son of Man, I have made thee a Watchman unto the House of Israel; therefore hear the Word at my Mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."*

From these passages, it plainly appears, how strict will be the account which Ministers will be required to give; how aweful is the state, and how dreadful will be the doom, of those who neglect their Duty; and, consequently, what strong Obligations they are under, to watch for the souls of their people.

These Obligations, indeed, are no where more distinctly stated, than in the Ordination

* Ezek. iii. 17, 18, 19. — xxxiv. 4—7, 8, 9, 10.

Service of our Church. The following extract from that solemn charge, which every Minister receives from the Bishop, on his admission to the order of Priests, contains a clear and most Scriptural view both of the Duties and Responsibility of the Pastoral office: — 'Have always printed on your 'remembrance, how great a treasure is 'committed to your charge. For they are 'the Sheep of Christ, which He bought 'with his death, and for whom he shed his 'blood. The Church and Congregation, 'whom you must serve, is his spouse and 'his body. And if it shall happen that the 'same Church, or any Member thereof, do 'take any hurt or hinderance, by reason of 'your negligence, you know the greatness 'of the fault, and also the horrible punish-'ment that will ensue. Wherefore consider 'with yourselves the end of your ministry 'towards the Children of God, towards 'the spouse and body of Christ; and see, 'that you never cease your labours, your 'care, and diligence, until you have done '*all that lieth in you*, according to your 'bounden duty, to bring all such as are 'or shall be committed to your charge, 'unto that agreement in the faith and know-'ledge of God, and to that ripeness and 'perfection of age in Christ, that there be

'no place left among you, either for error 'in Religion, or for viciousness of life.' — Judge, my brethren, from this passage, what is the duty of a Minister towards his people, and how great are his obligations to discharge it. Let us now turn to the other side, and enquire into the Duty of the People towards their Ministers.

II. It must be plain that Duty begets Duty. Where there is a Duty on the one side, there must be a Duty to answer it on the other side. If Ministers be required to have the rule over their people, and to watch for their souls: what must be required of their People in return, but obedience and submission? Thus it is stated in the text, "*Obey them* that have the rule over you, and *submit* yourselves." Let us then see what are the nature and extent of this Obedience and Submission.

Are Ministers to rule over the *persons* of their people? Are they to lord it over their consciences? Such is not the Obedience which this passage enjoins. Such is not the Submission which the Ministers of the Gospel claim. They have not forgotten what Christ hath said, "Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among

you: but whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."* It is in the affections, it is in the hearts of their people that the Ministers desire to rule. The obedience which they ask for reaches only to the office which they hold. The submission which they require is a spiritual Submission. Such are the obedience and submission here enjoined, and they include at least the following particulars:—

1. It is the Duty of the People to attend on their Minister with a disposition to receive and follow his instructions. Not that they are required to believe or to do what he tells them, merely because he tells them. This would be to put *him* in the place of God; and *his* word in the place of the Divine Word. But still they are to regard him as the Person who fills the office appointed for their spiritual edification, and from whose labours and ministry they may hope to derive a peculiar blessing. In this respect they are required to submit to him; to obey his word, while it agrees with Scripture, and to honour the servant for the sake of that heavenly Master, whose commission he bears, and in whose name he speaks.

2. It is the Duty of the People to bear with the importunity and solicitude of their

* Matt. xx. 26, 27.

Minister in watching for their souls. They are not to take offence at his plain speaking, nor be impatient under his friendly admonitions. Should his zeal sometimes appear to be indiscreet, or his interference unreasonable; yet still they are to take what he does in good part, and not to forget, that the advice may be sound, and the intention in offering it sincere, though the manner of doing it may seemingly be harsh, and the endeavour, in their opinion, ill-timed.

3. It is the Duty of the People to join with their Minister in such plans and attempts as may best promote the object of his Ministry. Does he, for example, point out any particular means by which immorality and ungodliness may be checked, or the cause of true Religion may be encouraged and strengthened? Does he propose that such an ungodly custom should be left off, or such a salutary practice should be adopted? In these cases his people are justly required to attend to his proposals; and by their countenance and support to forward his endeavours. If they act otherwise; if, while he is thus watching for their souls; if, while he is recommending and introducing such measures, as may be most likely to advance their spiritual good, they refuse to concur in his designs, and even actively to assist in

accomplishing them, they clearly fail in the Obedience which they owe to Him: they do not comply with the spirit of the injunction in the text, nor "submit themselves," as they ought to do.

For this view of the People's Duty towards their Minister, let us turn to the Obligations which they are under to discharge it.

In the first place, the very *Office* of the Minister imposes it on them. If the Minister be bound, at the peril of his own soul, to rule over the people and to watch for their souls, doubtless they are bound, at the same peril, to wait on his ministry, and to submit to his spiritual guidance. The same Authority, which prescribes to Him his Duty, prescribes also to Them their Duty. And the same reasons, in both cases, enforce the performance of it. The end for which Ministers are ordained, namely, to save the souls of the people committed to them, cannot be attained, unless both parties diligently fulfil their respective duties. To what purpose does the Minister watch, if the People do not submit? To what end is he commanded to rule, if *they* are at liberty not to obey? The ministerial Office is God's appointment: and whenever it is faithfully executed, to reject it, is to reject not man but God. Remember

Who hath said, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me."*

But, in the second place, the *Object* which the Minister has in view, strongly obliges the people to discharge their Duty towards him. For whose souls does he watch, but for theirs? For whose happiness, for whose salvation does he labour, but for theirs? For whom does he spend his strength, wear out his spirits, encounter opposition, and endure reproach, but for them? How he may do them the most good, how he may best advance their spiritual interest, is the frequent subject of his meditations, in his study, in his walks, and on his bed. Is it not reasonable, then, that his People should concur with his designs, and have the same object in view? Is it not reasonable, that by an affectionate attachment to his person and ministry, they should endeavour to lessen his difficulties, and repay his toils?

But let it be considered, thirdly, that in this, as well as in every other instance, Duty and Interest are closely joined together. It is the People's *Interest* to obey them that have the rule over them, and to submit to

* Luke, x. 16.

those who watch for their souls. The minister, let it be recollected, must give an account of his Ministry. And do we suppose that this account relates only to Himself? Doubtless, it relates to his people also. He must hereafter give a final account of his own diligence and faithfulness in his office; but even now, he must give as it were a daily account of the success of his labours, and of the reception which he meets with, from those to whom he is sent. And according as this account be favourable or otherwise, he cannot but give it with joy or grief. But which, think you, will be most profitable for them? Will it be most for their advantage, that in his private devotions, with thankfulness and gladness of heart, he should bless God for the humility and teachableness which he finds among them; in that they "hear meekly the word, receive it with pure affection, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit;" or, that he should be compelled, with tears and sorrow of heart, to complain of their obstinacy and unbelief, and to testify against them, that they are a people who refuse instruction, and will not obey the word of the Lord? The text expressly tells us that such a testimony will be *unprofitable* to them. And, doubtless, it

must be so. It must be displeasing to God. It must provoke His anger against them; and *may* lead Him in the end to say, "It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways; I therefore swear unto them in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my rest."

Such is the view given in the Text of the Duties, which Ministers and their People mutually owe to each other, and of the Obligations, by which they are severally bound to the performance of these Duties. On the whole, one reflection strongly forces itself on the mind. If such be the aweful and sacred Relation between a Minister and his People; if such be their respective Duties and Obligations, then how greatly do both parties need the constant and affectionate intercessions of each other! How earnestly should the People pray for their Minister, that he may distinctly see his Duty, and have grace, wisdom, and courage, faithfully to perform it! How earnestly should the Minister pray for his People, that they may submit to his spiritual guidance, and may profit by his labours among them! If this mutual intercession were more generally practised, the most happy effects might justly be expected to follow. Prayer is the hand which brings down blessings from heaven.

And Prayer would bring down a blessing both on Ministers and People. Great grace would be upon them all. The word of God would run and be glorified. Sinners in great multitudes would be turned from the error of their ways; and the servants of God would be strengthened and built up in their most holy faith.

In the words of our Church, then, let us beseech Almighty God, that He would "make all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach His holy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the Crown of Everlasting glory for Jesus Christ's sake."*

* See Collect for Saint Peter's Day.

SERMON XVIII.

CONVERSION TO GOD A REAL CHANGE OF HEART.

ISAIAH, lxv. 1.

I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, Behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

IT was God's design from the beginning to call the Gentile Nations into his Church; and in due time, to admit them to all the Blessings and Privileges of the Gospel. The Jews, indeed, were his peculiar people: but this distinction in their favour was made only for a particular purpose, and for a limited season. They were chosen especially for this end, that they might preserve in the world the Knowledge of the True God, and thus prepare the way for the coming of that promised Redeemer, who, when he should come, was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the Glory of His people Israel."

It is this great Event, to which the Text chiefly relates, as we are taught by St. Paul, who brings it as an express prophecy of the Conversion of the Gentiles. Under the Guidance of such an inspired Interpreter, we cannot err in making this application of the Passage. "I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, Behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." In this view we may consider the passage as setting before us three things.

I. The wretched state of the Gentiles before their Conversion to Christianity.

II. The surprising and glorious change, which was then wrought in them.

III. The simple but powerful Means, by which this great work was accomplished.

I. In speaking of the wretchedness of the Gentiles, before their Conversion to Christianity, it is not meant to describe them as savages or barbarians, altogether sunk in want and ignorance, and destitute of the necessaries, the conveniences, or even the elegant comforts of life. Many of the Gentile Nations, in these respects, had made considerable progress. So far as worldly things were concerned, they came very little, if at all, behind ourselves. In arts, in arms,

in learning, in agriculture, and in commerce, they greatly flourished. They were rich and powerful, and produced many eminent Characters, whose talents and exploits have commanded the admiration of mankind. But notwithstanding all these things in their favour, the Gentile world was *wretched.* There was one grand point, in which they were totally wanting; one point, for the want of which, no other advantages, however great or many, could make amends. They knew not God. In this respect, with all their riches, they were miserably poor; with all their knowledge, they were miserably ignorant. In this respect, indeed, "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Nay, they not only were without God in the world, but they even made no search and enquiry after Him. Such is the representation which the Almighty gives of the Gentiles in the text. They "*asked not* for Him;" they "*sought* Him not." Surrounded with the wonderful works of God, they yet asked not who was the Maker of them. They bowed down before stocks and stones: before four-footed beasts and creeping things; and satisfied with these religious performances, they sought no farther. Senseless and stupid as the idols which they worshipped, they gave

themselves over to lasciviousness, and worked "all uncleanness with greediness." Considered in this light, the Gentiles were wretched. Considered in respect to their state as sinners, ignorant of the nature and Holiness of the true God, and of the only way to His favour and acceptance, they were sunk in the most deplorable wretchedness.

II. Observe, in the next place, the surprising and glorious Change which was wrought in them. "I am sought of them that asked not for me. I am found of them that sought me not." See the Gentile Nations coming forth out of that dreadful darkness, in which they had been so awefully plunged! See them awakening from their spiritual sleep! — They are *seeking* that God for whom they formerly asked not. Brought to discern His infinite perfections, His Majesty, Holiness, and Power, they tremble before Him. Convinced of their apostasy and guilt, they are imploring His mercy, and seeking reconciliation and forgiveness. — They have *found* that God, whom once they sought not. They have discovered His goodness, grace, and glory in the Gospel; and confounded and ashamed, on account of their former transgressions, they are now

crying out, "What have we to do any more with Idols?" Contemplate the glorious change! See those who were lately sacrificing to Devils, now worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth: those, who lately were led captive by Satan at his will, now delivered from his wretched slavery, and become the willing servants of God: those, who lately lived in lust, in rapine, in the commission of the most execrable crimes, in the gratification of the most abominable passions, now made new creatures in Christ Jesus, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, in all holy conversation and godliness. In these particulars, contemplate the glorious change foretold in the text: the glorious change, which, at the appointed time, gradually took place in the Gentile world: when, in the figurative language of the Prophet, "The desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. The parched ground became a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water:" when, "instead of the thorn, came up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier, came up the myrtle-tree."*

III. Consider farther, the simple, but powerful Means, by which this glorious change was accomplished.—"I said, Be-

* Isaiah, xxxv. 1. 7. — lv. 13.

hold me, Behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. The Lord, by his Word, revealed his grace and glory to the Heathen. He sent forth His Apostles into all lands, bearing the glad tidings of Salvation: proclaiming the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent; and inviting all, even the Chief of Sinners, to take refuge in the arms of a crucified Saviour. "Behold me, Behold me;" "Look unto me, and be ye saved;" "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" Believe on me, and live; was the substance of that Gospel, which was preached among all nations; and which, wherever it was preached, however weak it might seem to the carnal eye, became powerful, through the Spirit, for pulling down the strong holds of Satan, and for setting up the glorious kingdom of Christ. The doctrine of the Cross, though to some a stumbling-block, and to others foolishness, yet proved itself, by its effects, to be both the wisdom and the power of God.

Such are the views set before us in the text, of the wretched State of the Gentiles, of their conversion to Christianity, and of the Means, by which it was accomplished.—Nor let us suppose that these are points in which we can feel but little interest. On

the contrary, we are deeply concerned in them, and ought to regard them with feelings of the most lively gratitude. Let us remember, that however deplorable was the state of the Gentile world before its Conversion to Christianity, such was once the state of this country, and of those who lived in it; such, at this moment, would have been still their state, if God had not sent His light and truth among them; if, when they were as yet a nation not called by His name, "without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," He had not said to them, by the preaching of His word, "Behold Me, Behold Me." Is He now sought where once he was not asked for? Is He found where once he was not sought? Are we not now bowing down before those dumb and senseless Idols which our forefathers worshipped? Do we know the Truth as it is in Jesus? Have we access with confidence, through His blood, to a Mercy-seat? Are we blessed with the word of life, with the means of grace, with the hope of glory? Surely these are mercies which call for all our thankfulness: Mercies in which we ought to feel the liveliest joys, and to take the

deepest interest. Then let us lift up our hearts to God, in praise and prayer. Let us thankfully praise Him, for the glorious light which He has vouchsafed unto us. Let us earnestly pray to Him, that we may not receive this grace in vain. Nor let us feel only for ourselves. Let us feel for others also. Let us pity those nations, which yet lie in darkness and in the shadow of death. Let us long and labour for their Conversion. Let us pray that God would send forth among them His glorious light, till all the kingdoms of the earth shall see His salvation, and become the Kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ.

But, my brethren, there is another way of applying the Text, in which we are still more deeply concerned. While this Prophecy receives its grand accomplishment, in the general Conversion of the Gentile nations, it is also fulfilled in the particular Conversion of every individual sinner. The Preaching of the word is still the appointed instrument which God usually blesses for bringing back sinners to Himself: and whenever this glorious work is done; whenever the proud, self-righteous Pharisee is brought to pray, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" whenever the unjust and worldly publican is led to smite upon

his breast and cry for mercy; whenever the dissolute and sensual Prodigal is prevailed on to confess his sins, and to seek reconciliation with his offended Father; whenever any one of these instances occur, then is the prophecy again fulfilled. With respect to all such returning sinners, it may be truly said, "God is sought of them that asked not for Him, He is found of them that sought him not." Blessed are those to whom the words can be thus applied! Blessed are those who are now seeking the Lord; though in times past they sought Him not; for they that seek shall find! But what shall we say of ourselves? Is this Blessedness ours? Can these words be thus applied to us? Can God say of us, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not?" In short, are we penitent, humbled, converted sinners? This is a point on which it concerns us to examine ourselves with seriousness and impartiality. It is a great, an invaluable privilege, that we have been born in a country where the true light shineth. We have reason, indeed, to bless God, that He has conferred this mercy on us. But let us remember, that this privilege in itself is not enough. With all the outward splendour of the Gospel shin-

ing around us, we may be all darkness within. With respect to the actual condition of our souls, we may be in no better a state, than if we belonged to a country still sunk in heathenism and idolatry. Christians in name, we may yet be Gentiles in heart. No outward dispensation can of itself change the heart. By nature all are Gentiles. — Pride, Selfishness, Aversion from God and holiness, Love of sensual gratifications, and an Idolatrous Attachment to the world, are dispositions which naturally reign in every child of Adam. But till these evil dispositions are broken, and in a measure subdued, there can be no true religion in the soul. The heathen, bowing down before his idols of wood and stone, is as near to the kingdom of heaven as the merely nominal Christian, who, though he call himself a Servant of Christ, and attend on the ordinances of the Gospel, still keeps his natural, carnal heart. For what is the difference between them? In their outward circumstances, indeed, they do not exactly agree: but in *heart* they are the same. They both alike are ignorant of the true God: they both alike love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil: they both alike are under the dominion of selfish, sensual, covetous desires; they both alike are strangers to

Christ, the hope of Glory. In a word, they both are descended from the corrupt stock of Adam, and consequently both bear his image, and inherit his depraved and fallen nature. Grace only can change the heart: and till a man undergo this change, let his name, his country, his profession, his privileges, be what they may, he is still but "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." This is a Truth extremely offensive to the carnal mind, and we may almost judge of our own state, by the feelings with which we hear this truth asserted. The natural man listens with impatience to the spiritual doctrine of the renewal of the heart. It appears to him foolishness: and thus either excites his ridicule, or provokes his wrath. But it is a doctrine to which theexperience of all real Christians, without any exception, bears witness. In whatever other respects they may differ, in this one point they all agree. They all agree in declaring, that by the power of the grace of God, working together with His word upon their hearts, they have been brought into a state very different from that in which they naturally were. They have now a spiritual discernment of those Scriptural Truths, which once appeared foolishness unto them; they feel the con-

straining influence of motives, to which they were formerly strangers: they experience hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, of which they once had no conception. What is the language of one? 'The time was when I 'knew nothing of Jesus Christ. I was careless of my soul. I thought not of eternity. 'Sunk in ignorance and vice, I was wholly 'given up to sensual enjoyments. I had no 'pleasure, but in gratifying my fleshly lusts. 'I wrought the will of the Gentiles, and 'lived without God in the world. But the 'Lord in mercy brought me to myself.— 'By his word and Spirit he quickened me, 'when dead in trespasses and sins, and 'breathed into my soul a spiritual life.— 'Trembling and astonished, I was led to 'seek that God and Saviour, for whom I 'had not asked. Blessed be the Riches of 'divine mercy, I did not seek in vain. I 'found Him whom once I sought not. I 'found Him faithful to his promise, and 'mighty to save. He has blotted out all 'my sins, and filled my soul with peace. 'He has delivered me from the bondage of 'corruption, and enabled me to walk in 'newness of life. I stand a monument of 'redeeming grace, to the praise and glory. 'of his holy name.'——What is the confession of another? 'Once I loved the

'world, and the things of the world, with 'supreme delight. My affections were all 'set on earthly objects. My only aim was to 'grow rich and increase my substance. As 'for God, I had no knowledge of him; no 'fear of his wrath, no desire after his favour. 'If my worldly affairs prospered, my utmost 'wishes were gratified. But the Lord met 'me in my ruinous course. He mercifully 'opened my eyes, which the god of this 'world had blinded. He taught me to see 'the vanity of all earthly objects and pur-'suits. He taught me to compare the 'things which are seen with the things 'which are not seen. He revealed to me 'the only valuable treasure, a treasure in 'Heaven. There my affections now are 'fixed. The Lord himself is my portion. 'I prize his favour above all things. There 'is none upon earth, that I desire besides 'Him. When he lifts up the light of his 'countenance upon me, I find far greater 'and more genuine pleasure, than I ever 'felt at the increase of my corn, and cattle, 'and gold.' Listen to the declaration of a Third. 'Great has been the Divine mercy 'to me. I was long led captive by Satan, 'when I suspected it not. I was puffed up 'with a proud conceit of my own goodness. 'Because my conduct was free from gross



'sins, I presumptuously thought, that I was 'righteous before God. At least, I sup- 'posed that my good actions would fully 'make amends for my evil deeds; and, con- 'sequently, that *I* had nothing to do with 'being "saved by grace through faith." 'But it pleased the Lord to take away the 'veil from my eyes. By His spirit He con- 'vinced me of sin. He showed me what I 'really was. He set before me the spiritual 'demands of his heart-searching Law. He 'led me to see how far short my fancied 'goodness fell of this holy standard. Thus 'He humbled my pride. He taught me 'to cry for mercy; to renounce my own 'righteousness; to receive with thankful- 'ness the gift of free salvation; and to '"live the life which I now live in the 'flesh, by faith in the Son of God." He 'hath "brought me by a way that I knew 'not. He hath led me in paths that I did 'not know. He hath made darkness light 'before me, and crooked things straight." 'These things hath he done unto me, and 'hath not forsaken me.' — In using this language, I trust that I am speaking to the experience of some who hear it. They bear witness to the truth of what I say. — They know that Religion is a real, an in- ward work; a work of grace upon the heart.

May they daily know more of its power in purifying their affections, in leading them to a more simple dependence on Jesus Christ, in fitting them for every good work, and in filling them with all the fruits and consolations of the Spirit!

But, on the other hand, I must still be afraid, that there are others, who know nothing of this matter; who, when they hear of a work of grace on the soul, of the conversion of the heart to God, are ready to ask, "How can these thing be?" My brethren, your very ignorance on this subject is of itself a strong ground for suspecting that you are as yet strangers to true Religion. Without some knowledge of the doctrine concerning which I speak; without some inward testimony to the truth of it, you have great reason to fear that at present you "have neither part nor lot in the matter." God is still an unknown God to you. The Gospel of Christ is still an unknown Gospel. You are unacquainted with your own spiritual wants and weakness. You see not the gracious and all-sufficient Remedy provided. Calling yourself free, you are still a slave under the bondage of corruption, a prisoner under sentence of condemnation. — But if this be your case, is it therefore desperate? Are you void of

all hope? God forbid! No man's case can be desperate, while Jesus is still saying to him, "Behold me, Behold me." None can be void of all hope, while Jesus is still revealing Himself to them, and calling on them to look on Him and be saved. It is thus that, by his Word and his Ministers, He still speaks to you. It is thus that, in the Gospel, He still reveals himself to you, and calls on you to behold Him as the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Behold Him coming down from Heaven to seek and save your soul. Behold Him dying on the Cross to expiate your sins. Behold Him ascending into Heaven to plead your cause. Behold Him, though hitherto you have neglected to ask for Him, yet ready to manifest Himself unto you. Behold Him, though hitherto you have not sought for Him, yet willing to make all his goodness pass before you. No longer, then, turn away in proud disdain, and reject his gracious invitations. No longer shut your eyes, and refuse to see. Seek Him now, even now, and you shall find him full of mercy, grace, and love. Ask for Him now, and you shall see his glory.

May his Spirit accompany this call! May he bring home this message with power to your heart! Then you will *indeed* behold

Him. You will have such different views of Him, from those which you have hitherto had, that with holy Job you will cry out, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee!" or adopting the admiring language of the queen of Sheba, you will exclaim: "It was a true report that I heard; howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the half was not told me." *

* Job, xlii. 5. — 1 Kings, x. 6, 7.

SERMON XIX.

DESCRIPTION AND BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

ROMANS, viii. 28.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the Called according to his purpose.

THE truly religious man is the only truly happy man. The profane and ungodly may scoff at this remark. Worldly persons may disregard it, and count those happy whom God abhorreth. But, whatever may be said to the contrary, it is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, "that Blessed are the People, who have the Lord for their God."

If there be one passage of Scripture which, above others, sets forth the blessedness of God's people, it is the text. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the Called according to his purpose." Let us here consider,

I. The Description given of God's people.
II. The glorious Truth declared concerning them.

I. The Bible, while it so plainly sets forth the blessedness of God's people; no less plainly tells us who they are. It does not, indeed, mention their names, but it describes their character. It shows us *who* they are, by showing us *what* they are. The text goes even farther than this. It not only describes the Character of God's people; but it also points out the means through which they have acquired this character. While it shows us *what* they are, it also shows us *how* they became so. They are those "who love God, and are the Called according to his purpose." They are Lovers of God. This is their Character. How did they become so? They have been "called according to his purpose." Their loving God is the consequence, the effect of their being *thus* called. Let us see, then, what is meant by this Call.

The purpose of God is to save sinners by faith in his Son Jesus Christ; to reconcile them to himself "through Sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he calleth them by his Gospel." All persons, therefore, to whom God, whether by his

ministers or by his written word, makes known the Gospel, in one sense are *called*. They are bidden to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. They are invited to share the blessings and privileges of the Gospel. But not all who are *thus* called are called in the sense here meant. They are not all called "according to God's purpose." Many, it is to be feared, neither comply with the purpose, nor answer the end, for which they have been called. If they profess to receive the Gospel, yet they receive it not in the power and love of it. They hold the truth in unrighteousness; are destitute of the spirit of faith; and continue ungodly and impenitent.—But there are others, who are in a different state: who are not only called, but chosen: who not only hear the call, but, through grace, obey it. Being "by the Spirit convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement;" of the greatness and guilt of their own sin in particular; of the all-sufficient righteousness and justification provided in Jesus Christ for every penitent believer; of the certain and dreadful judgement which awaits unpardoned sinners; they have fled to the Gospel for peace and safety. Believing "the record which God has given of his Son;" by faith they have sought an interest in that Son. They have

committed their souls into his hands: they have come to him as their only and Almighty Saviour; "of God made unto them Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption." Thus have they been made partakers of the grace of the Gospel. Henceforth they live by faith. By faith they forsake their sins. By faith they overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh, and walk in newness of life. — These are "the called according to God's purpose." They are called not only by the word, but by the Spirit awakening the conscience, persuading the will, and bringing the soul to Christ. And the consequence of being thus called is this, that they "love God." Their "faith works by love."

To love God, and to love Him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, is our bounden duty and service. God has the strongest claim to our love. He has every thing in himself which can deserve and engage our love: and thus to love him is at once the highest privilege and happiness of our nature. But, to our shame be it spoken, that, naturally, we love him not. Such is the dreadful depravity of our fallen nature, that, far from loving God, we do not like "to retain him in our knowledge," and have even an aversion from him: for

"the carnal mind is enmity against God."* But the persons described in the text have, in this respect, been greatly altered. That Holy Spirit who sanctifies all the elect people of God sanctifies them. He has wrought a surprising change in their hearts. He has renewed their nature. He has subdued their enmity. He has taken away the carnal mind. Having called them "with a holy calling," he has given them far other thoughts of God, far other dispositions towards Him. He has shed abroad in their hearts, a sense of God's great love in their Redemption. He has taught them to look up to Him, as God in Christ, reconciling them unto Himself. "He has made all his goodness pass before them," as it is revealed in the person and Gospel of his Son: till "thus beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they have been changed into the same image from glory to glory." They have learned to think with hope and pleasure on those glorious perfections, which once filled them with terror and despair. They meditate with gratitude and delight on the mercies which they have received from God; and love him because he first loved them. Such has been the consequence of their being "called according to God's

* Romans, viii. 7.

purpose." "*Because* they are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying Abba, Father." *

Do you ask, then, whether *you* are one of God's people; whether *you* are one of the "Called according to his purpose?" This question must be answered by another: Do you love God? If you love him not, you cannot be one of the persons described in the text; for they "love God." Now, consider what the true love of God is, and how, if true, it will show itself.

The love of God is a love of Him as He really is: a love of him in all those glorious perfections, by which he has made himself known to us in the Bible. Many persons, it is to be feared, deceive themselves in this matter. They think that they love God, when, so far from loving him, they do not even know him. The fact is, that the God, whom they profess to love, is not God as revealed in the Bible, but God as represented by their own imagination. Drawing their notions of him, not from his word, but from their own corrupt minds, they suppose him to be a Being, who if he does not actually love sin, yet has at least no utter hatred of it: as a Being, who is too merciful to punish Sin; and will readily admit the ex-

* Gal. iv. 6.

cuses which Sinners make for themselves. Such are their notions of God. They "think him altogether such a one as themselves;" and therefore they love him. For the same reason the Heathen loved his idols; for he believed them to favour the sins of which he himself was fond; and to delight in those evil practices to which his own heart was most inclined. —— But the true love of God is a love of Him in his true character. To *love* Him in the Scriptural meaning of the word, and as those who are called according to his purpose love Him, is to love Him as He really is, and because He is what He is. The man who truly loves God, would not wish Him to be otherwise than He has shown himself to be.

Is it *thus*, then, that *you* love God? Do you believe him to be a Just and Holy God: so holy, as to hate sin with a perfect hatred; so just as by no means to clear the guilty? Do you believe him to be "a jealous God;" "a consuming fire:" "searching the heart, and trying the reins;" "requiring truth in the inward parts;" "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;" the terrible Avenger of all who live ungodly; the righteous Judge, "who will render to every man according to his works?" — Are these your thoughts of God? And,

having these thoughts, do you yet love him? Do you love Him because he is so just and holy? Would you not wish Him to be less just and holy? The man who would strip God of any of his glory, cannot love Him. The language and feeling of the soul which truly loves Him are these: 'O Lord! though 'thy justice righteously condemns me be- 'cause of my iniquities; and thy holiness 'makes me utterly ashamed because of my 'uncleanness; yet I love thee the more for 'these thy glorious perfections. Were it 'possible that I could believe thee to be 'less Just or Holy, I should love thee less.'

Consider, farther, if you have the true love of God in your heart, how it will show itself.

If you truly love God, you will love every thing belonging to him. You will love his law and service. You cannot love God, and yet count his commandments grievous. The service of those whom we love is a pleasant service. Such, if you love God, you will esteem and find his service. You will love his ordinances. You cannot love God, and yet regard his Sabbath as weariness. You cannot love God, and yet treat his word with indifference. You cannot love God, and yet negligently or formally attend his worship. Rather you

will say and feel with David, "One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand in the tents of wickedness." "O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day." "My soul thirsteth for God; for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" —— You will love the people of God. You cannot love God; and yet not love his people. The people of God are his children: and how is it possible that you should love Him that begat, and not love those who are begotten of Him? If you truly love God, you will, for His sake, feel a love towards all men, but especially towards those who, as you believe, bear his image, and are beloved of him. Though poor, despised, and worthless, in the sight of men, you will regard them with preference and peculiar affection; and will particularly seek to do them good, "because of the Lord their God."

It has been necessary to dwell the longer on this point, because so much depends on it. If you love not God, you are not, as yet at least, "called according to his purpose:" you have not that mark which all his people have. You want that inward work of the Spirit in your heart, which only can make you the children of God, by disposing you to obey his call, and by putting

his love into your soul. At the same time, do not hastily conclude that you do not as yet love God, because you may not feel your love to Him so strong, so warm, so constant, as you could wish to feel it. God's people have always found it thus. They have always lamented the weakness and coldness of their affection for Him. See, then, whether this be the case with you. — While you feel that you love not God as you ought to do, are you longing to love Him more? Are you really ashamed and grieved that you love Him so little? Do you esteem this hardness of heart to be sin, and utterly condemn yourself on account of it? Do you pray that you may love God more? Do you strive to increase his love in your heart? Are you fearful of displeasing him; and, to this end, are you watchful over all your ways? God grant, my brethren, that many of us may have a well-grounded hope that we are indeed the Lord's people! May the Holy Spirit shine into our hearts, and enable us, when we examine ourselves in the way which has been stated, to see that we are indeed the "Called of God, according to his purpose!"

Such are the persons described in the text. We consider,

II. The glorious Truth declared concerning them. "All things work together for good to them." This truth, says the Apostle, *we know*. We are fully convinced, we have undoubted assurance of it. The perfections of God; the promises of the Gospel; the history and experience of God's people in every age: join in declaring that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Here we are first reminded of God's universal providence. He ruleth over all.—Nothing happeneth *by chance*, as men often thoughtlessly, and sometimes profanely, say. It is God, who ordereth all things both in heaven and in earth. The least, as well as the greatest events, which come to us, come to us by his permission or appointment. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground, but he seeth it. There is not a hair in our head but is numbered.

Secondly, we are here taught, that as God's providence ruleth over all; so it is especially exercised in behalf of his people. In all that he does, He has their interest at heart, and graciously orders every thing with a view to their advantage. Their happiness he desires and intends; and as He has power to fulfil his designs, so he has also

wisdom to see what means are best suited to the end. Thus, under his Almighty care, all things work for good to his people. *All things*, not only those which appear to be most prosperous and favourable, but those, also, which wear a different appearance; losses, disappointments, troubles, sorrows, are made instrumental, in his hand, for accomplishing the purposes of his love.

Thirdly, we are led to notice the *manner* in which these purposes are accomplished. "All things work *together* for good;" not *singly*, not *separately*, but *together*. All the events which befall the real Christian, are not only contributing by themselves to work out good for him; but all are helping one another to make that good greater, and to make it complete. Even those things which appear least likely to be for his advantage, are yet really promoting it. They are parts of that great whole which God is employing for his good. Every event is so bearing its particular part in the general work; so supplying what is wanting, correcting what is hurtful, and adding what is useful in some other event; that if only one should be left out, the work itself would be unfinished and imperfect. They are "all working together for good." What a striking example of this truth do we find in

the history of Joseph! His cruel treatment from his brethren; his servitude in Egypt; the false accusations of his mistress; his disgrace and imprisonment; were so many steps, which, under the direction of infinite wisdom, were made subservient to his future advancement. In this long chain of events, had one of the links been wanting, we see not how he would have risen to that high station in the Court of Pharaoh which enabled him afterwards to become the preserver of his family, and of the whole land of Egypt. Doubtless, on looking back on the Lord's dealings with him, he would feelingly own, that "All things had worked together for good to him."

What, however, is the Good chiefly meant in the text? Is it temporal good? Is it worldly prosperity? Do all things work together to make the people of God rich, and great, and prosperous in the world? Experience will not allow us to suppose that this is the meaning of the text. We often see them poor and destitute, and weighed down with afflictions, even to the very end of their days. Nor, indeed, would the Scriptures themselves agree with such an interpretation. When they speak of what is good for man, they look not to his temporal, but to his spiritual good. They speak of what is good, not for his body, but for his soul; not for his

present perishing condition, but for his future everlasting state. And this is the sense in which we must understand the text: "All things work together for *good* to them that love God;" for good to their souls, to their spiritual and eternal interests. All the dispensations of God towards them are designed to make them fitter for heaven; to make them holier now, that they may be happier hereafter.

Thus trials and temptations discover to them their weakness; stir up their watchfulness; put life into their prayers; and call forth their graces into action. Thus losses and disappointments wean their hearts from the world; teach them to set their affections on things above; and quicken their desires and exertions after their heavenly inheritance. Thus afflictions and sicknesses lead them to a stricter self-examination, and to a closer walk with God. Nay, thus even their very infirmities and mistakes, though not approved by the Lord, are yet oftentimes mercifully over-ruled to their spiritual good: By these, their self-confidence is weakened; their self-abasement is increased; their godly sorrow is renewed; and Christ is made more precious to their souls.

But there is no giving the full meaning of this truth declared in the text. The longer

we consider it, the more we find in it. The Lord's people are his chosen: his Beloved; his Heritage; the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. He will soon come and take them to himself. In the mean time he watches over them with a fatherly care. He guides, He feeds, and protects them. In all which he does with them, in all which he calls them to do, He is consulting and furthering their everlasting happiness; daily making them more meet for their heavenly inheritance, and qualifying them for the enjoyment of a more exceeding weight of glory. So that in the words of the Apostle, we may say, "All things are theirs; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs: for they are Christ's, and Christ's is God's." *

There are two purposes for which I would shortly apply this subject.

1. Let those who are *not* yet "called according to God's purpose," be stirred up to seek an interest in the glorious privilege of which we have been speaking. You have seen, my friends, the happiness of being the Lord's People. You cannot but allow, that blessed is the state of those, to whom all

* 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

things are working together for good. But is this your case? Are *you* thus blessed? Alas! far otherwise. While you continue ungodly, your state is the very reverse of that which has been described. While you love *not* God, all things are working together for *evil* to you. The Gifts of Providence which you abuse or waste, by increasing your accountableness, are increasing your guilt. Prosperity hardens your heart, and by furnishing you with the means of gratifying your fleshly lusts, proves a snare and destruction to your soul. Adversity makes you impatient, leads you to vent your unhumbled feelings in murmuring and blasphemy, and thus brings into action the hidden wickedness of the heart. In short, every event which befalls you tends, in some way or other, to treasure up for you wrath against the day of wrath; while every hour which comes brings nearer that dreadful moment, when the evil which now pursues impenitent sinners will for ever overwhelm them. Consider, then, these things, while yet there is time. Listen to the call of the Gospel. Be obedient to it. Open your heart to receive it. Pray that the Holy Spirit may powerfully constrain you to repent and turn to God, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Pray that

"Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." "So iniquity shall not be your ruin." So shall you become the Called, the Chosen of God. His love shall be within you: and all things shall work together for your great and everlasting good.

2. Let those who already hope that they are the Lord's people, be stirred up to make a practical and profitable use of the Truth before us. "All things are working together for your good:" for the good of your soul; that best, that most valuable part of you. Let this thought reconcile you to all the events which may befall you. However seemingly adverse and unfavourable, they are yet those which your heavenly Father, in his love and wisdom, sees to be best for you. Are your wishes disappointed? Are your plans crossed? Are your hopes delayed? Be assured that disappointments, crosses, and delays, are necessary for you. Are you in heaviness through manifold temptations? Remember, that there is a need for these things, and that the Lord knows what that need is. He says unto you as he said unto Peter, "What I do, thou knowest not now: but thou shalt know hereafter." At present, you may not always understand his dealings with you; nor see, at first, the particular good which every

trial is intended to produce. Nor is there any reason that you should see or understand these things *now*. Recollect, that you are walking "not by sight, but by faith." It is enough for you now to know, that all things are working together for your good. Strive to obtain an inward witness to this truth, by growing in grace, and drawing good out of every event. Strive to convince others of it, by letting your profiting appear unto all men; by letting them see that whether things are going well or ill with you in this world, you are still daily becoming fitter for a better world; still growing more meet for partaking of the inheritance of the Saints in light.

SERMON XX.

MOTIVES TO DILIGENCE AND EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

HEBREWS, iv. 11.

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.

ST. PAUL, in this part of his Epistle, in order to stir up the Hebrews to greater diligence and earnestness in their religious concerns, reminds them of what had befallen their Fathers in the Wilderness. Through unbelief and disobedience, they had lost the Inheritance which God had provided for them, and had provoked Him to swear in his wrath, that they should never enter into his rest. Let their Children take warning by the remembrance of these things, and not fall after the same example of unbelief. God had provided for them a better Inheritance. Through the Gospel, He had revealed to them a heavenly Canaan, an eternal Rest, prepared and kept in store for all those who, by patient continuance in well-

doing, look for glory, and honour, and immortality. "Having, then, a Promise of entering into this Rest, let them not seem to come short of it." "On the contrary," adds the Apostle in the text, "let us *labour* to enter into that rest." Let us spare no pains, let us neglect no means, which may secure to us an interest in this glorious promise.

Such is the meaning of the Exhortation in the text. From this view of it, we see that it belongs to us, as well as to the Hebrews. We are called upon as strongly as they were, to "*labour* to enter into that Rest," which "remaineth for the people of God." The same considerations, which should have weighed with *them*, ought to weigh with *us*. These may be regarded as chiefly two:—

I. That without labouring we can never enter into heavenly Rest.

II. That this Rest, when we shall have entered into it, will abundantly repay us for all our labour.

These two considerations I shall now endeavour to explain and enforce. The Lord grant that we may so feel the weight of them on our hearts, as to be persuaded to comply with the Exhortation in the text!

I. I am to show, that without labouring, we can never enter into Heavenly Rest.

Man is not sent into this world to be idle. He is required and forced to labour. According to the sentence denounced on him after the fall, "In the sweat of his face he must eat his bread."* Such, indeed, is the present state and constitution of things, that without labour, nothing useful or excellent can be attained. Without labour, we cannot acquire the comforts and conveniences of life. Without labour, we cannot arrive at distinction and pre-eminence. But while such is the case with respect to this present world, can we suppose that labour is unnecessary with respect to the world to come? Can we suppose that spiritual life is to be maintained without labour; or that heavenly rewards are to be procured without it? While the honour which cometh from man is the fruit of much toil and industry; is the honour which cometh from God to be obtained without these things? Far otherwise is the Doctrine of the Scriptures. They teach us, that Heaven will be the Reward of vigorous exertion and of patient perseverance. They direct us to "*work out* our salvation with fear and trembling:" to "*labour* for the meat which endureth

* Genesis, iii. 19.

unto everlasting life:" to "*give diligence* to make our calling and election sure:" to "*strive* to enter in at the straight gate." They compare a life of Religion to a *Warfare* and a *Race*, bidding us to "*fight* the good fight of faith;" to "*so run* that we may obtain;" to "*press towards* the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God." All these are ways of speaking which clearly convey the idea of earnestness and exertion; and imply the necessity of *labouring*, in order to enter into his heavenly Rest. St. Paul, indeed, in his own case, strongly asserts this necessity: for we find him saying, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."*

But while it is thus maintained that without labouring we cannot enter into heaven; let us not suppose that any countenance is given to the notion, that man is able to procure his own salvation. Far be such a thought from us. Salvation is the work and the gift altogether of God. He has wrought it for us, and given it to us.—"Death is the wages," the due desert and

* 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.

merited earning of sin; but, "eternal life is the gift of God:" not earned, not merited by man; but freely given to him of God. "God hath given to us Eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son." All the merit of our Salvation is in Jesus Christ. His sufferings and obedience unto death, were the procuring cause of it. His blood was the price of it. Even the Faith, by which we apply it to ourselves, is his Gift. From first to last, Salvation is of Grace. He justifies us *freely:* bestows on us the blessings of the Gospel, "*without money and without price;*" and "works in us, both to will and to do *of his good pleasure.*" Man's works, merits, obedience, have, *in this respect*, nothing to do with his Salvation. It is given not to him who worketh, but to him "who believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly."* But does not this statement go too far, and prove too much? If we be thus saved freely by grace, through faith, and not by our own works and doings, where is the necessity of that *Labour* which I am recommending? If Heaven be given to us solely through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, what occasion is there for our *labouring* in order to our entering into that Rest? Or, indeed, if it be through

* Romans, iv. 5.

faith that we enter in at all, how can we be said in any degree to *labour?* These are questions which can be readily answered: and which involve in them no real contradiction or difficulty. Let me remind you what the Christian life, or the life of faith, is. It is a course of thinking and acting directly contrary to all our natural ideas, desires, and propensities. It requires us to walk, not by sight, not by sense, which we are all prone to do; but by faith "as seeing Him who is invisible," and living on the word and promise of an unseen Saviour. It requires us to keep this faith in constant and lively exercise, when we are prone to distrust and unbelief. It commands us to be humble and lowly in our own conceit, when we are naturally proud and high-minded. It requires us to crucify the flesh, when we are prone to indulge it; to mortify the deeds of the body, when we are disposed to gratify them; to abolish the whole body of sin, when we are inclined to spare and favour it. It bids us daily to deny ourselves and to take up our cross, when we love to please ourselves and to avoid the cross. It commands us not to love the world, and the things of the world, when we naturally love nothing so well. It enjoins us not to fear man, not to value his favour, not to regard his anger and reproach, nor

to be led away by his example, when we are naturally disposed to do all these things. — This is what the life of faith requires: and need I ask, whether much *labour* is necessary for enabling us thus to oppose all our natural ideas, and to act directly contrary to all our natural inclinations? Does it require no exertion, rather does it not require great and constant exertion, thus to swim against the stream, to stem the powerful torrent of inbred corruption, and so to overcome the course of this present evil world, as to be enabled not only to make a stand against it, but even to move in an opposite direction? Let those who are making the trial be asked the question. Say to those who are now living the life of faith; who, while they are trusting to be saved by grace through faith, are yet striving to bring the body under, and to keep it in subjection; who are endeavouring to overcome their natural love and fear of the world; who are aiming to submit their will in all things to God's will, and to bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ; who are wrestling "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places." — Say to such persons, 'What think you of this matter? Is there

'much labour required in doing these 'things? Do you find the life of faith an 'easy work?' They will tell you, that thus to live by faith, is the most difficult of works: that it requires great and continual labour, unwearied diligence, unceasing watchfulness; and that without this labour, and diligence, and watchfulness, they would find it impossible to keep their ground much less to make any progress in the way to Heaven. 'This is the testimony which such persons will give. And such are the only Persons, whose testimony can be of any value in the case: for they only, who have made trial of the way of faith, can tell us what it is, and what *labour* is requisite for walking in it.' On their testimony, then, as well as on the general testimony of Scripture, we fully conclude, that without labour, we can never enter into that rest, which "remaineth for the people of God." — I show,

II. That this Heavenly Rest, when we shall have entered into it, will abundantly repay us for all our labour.

We know not at present how great will be the happiness of Heaven: neither is it probable that at present we could comprehend it. The Bible, indeed, to give us some ideas of it, describes it by such things as are

suited to our understandings. Hence we find it set forth as "a Kingdom," "a Throne," "a Crown," "an incorruptible Inheritance," an "exceeding weight of glory." But perhaps there is no way of describing it, which gives to us more clear and solid notions on the subject, than this used in the text. When heaven is said to be a place of *Rest*, we can understand something of what is meant. When we read that "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: for they rest from their labours;" we can form some notions of what this Blessedness will be, because we can understand what the Labours are from which they will rest.

In the first place, they will rest from their *bodily* labours. What is the life of a very large part of mankind, but a continued succession of toil and labour? From the cradle to the grave, they work hard for a subsistence: "they rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness." This, however, is but a part of what is meant by *bodily labours*. Under this expression, we may reckon all those sufferings, of every kind, to which the body is liable, and under which it so often labours. Hunger and thirst, cold and heat, pain and sickness, the infirmities of age and the approaches of death, are among those evils, under which

we here groan, being burdened. But from these evils there shall be an everlasting deliverance in heaven. There shall be a Rest from all these labours. "There shall be no more death; neither shall there be any more pain." The body shall be raised incorruptible; no longer subject to sickness or decay. It "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the heat nor sun smite it." It shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; and be thoroughly fitted for heavenly and never-ending life.

Secondly, there will be a rest from all the labours *of the mind.* Under this head are included those numerous afflictions, which now fall upon our minds, weigh down our spirits, and are far heavier to be borne than even those which affect the body. How many and deep are the sorrows which are now occasioned by worldly troubles and losses: by the misfortunes, the unkindness, and the death of friends; by the malice of enemies; by slanderous reports; by tormenting fears; by a thousand evils, which continually assault us! But to all these there will be an end in Heaven. There will be a Rest from all these labours. In that blessed seat of peace and happiness, there "will be no more sorrow nor crying." Every tear shall be

wiped away from every eye; and the days of all mourning shall be ended.

In the third place, there will be Rest from *spiritual labours*. We have seen that the Christian is here engaged in a constant struggle with the Devil, the world, and the flesh. Assaulted from without by temptation, and from within by corruption, he has no rest, day nor night. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and hourly wages war in his heart: while the effects of this spiritual conflict are frequently such, as to compel him with the Psalmist, to "go mourning all day long;" and with the Apostle to cry out, "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But in heaven there will be an end to all these troubles; a Rest from all these labours. There the warfare shall cease, the struggle shall end. In heaven there will be no sin, no temptation. The Devil will no longer be able to hurt the soul, by his horrid suggestions: for he will have no entrance thither. The world will no longer spread its allüring temptations; for there will be a new heaven, and a new earth, in which will dwell righteousness. The flesh will no longer pollute, distress, and impede; for it will be destroyed for ever. Freed from all these enemies, and perfectly renewed to the image of Christ;

the Christian will cease from his spiritual conflict, and will "find rest unto his soul!"

From this view of the subject we may form some notion of heavenly happiness. Great, without doubt, will be the happiness of resting from all these labours, these labours of body, mind, and soul. But this is not all which the word Rest here signifies. It has a farther and a most important meaning. It gives to us a still clearer and more perfect idea of that glorious blessedness which awaits the saints in light. It is used to describe that unspeakable delight, satisfaction, and enjoyment which the soul will experience in seeing God face to face. Thus God is said to have rested on the seventh day. In six days having completed the work of Creation, on the seventh day He beheld it with infinite complacency and delight. He saw that all was good, and was satisfied with this fresh display of his own glorious perfections. Thus will the soul rest satisfied in heaven with the sight which it will then obtain of God's glorious perfections. Even on earth, God is the only true Rest for the soul. And the soul, which is alive unto God, both knows and feels it to be so. In vain it seeks for rest in worldly things. They cannot satisfy it. They yield it no true delight. It may wander among

them in search of happiness; but, like Noah's Dove, it can find no rest, till it go back to the ark. It was under a feeling conviction of this truth, that David said, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!"* Return unto God, who only is *thy* rest, 'the Ark of thy 'salvation: where only thou canst find se-'curity and peace.' But if such be the delight with which the soul here rests in God, where its knowledge of Him, at the best, is so little and imperfect, what will be its joy and blessedness hereafter, when it shall rest in Him, as its full and everlasting portion, and know Him even as itself is known?—See then the Rest, which "remaineth for the People of God:" a glorious Rest; a Rest from all their labours; a Rest in God, as their joy, their portion, their exceeding and eternal great Reward. Will not such a Rest abundantly repay us for all our labours? When we shall have once entered into it, shall we think that we have suffered too much, on the way to it? What, in that hour, will be our thoughts? Shall we say to ourselves, 'I have laboured in vain: I have toiled to 'no purpose; I bestowed more pains in 'coming to heaven, than I now find it to be 'worth?—Rather, shall we not say, O, Bliss 'unspeakable! O, Glory inconceivable!

* Psalm cxvi. 7.

'What were all the labours, which I endured in coming hither, compared with the Rest which I now feel? Do I wish that I had laboured less, that I had bestowed less pains in resisting and overcoming the enemies of my salvation? What! Though I then did sow in tears; yet now I reap in joy. Though I then did suffer affliction with the people of God; yet how light was that affliction, compared with the eternal weight of glory, which it has wrought out for me! I now, indeed, find, by a blessed experience, the truth of those words, which I so often heard in the days of my flesh; that my "labour has not been in vain in the Lord."'

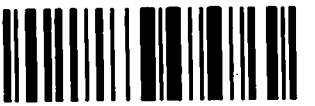
Such are the considerations which I proposed to explain and enforce. What is the practical Conclusion which they press upon us? Seeing that such a Rest remains for the people of God; and that without labouring we can never enter into it, let *us* labour, my brethren. Let us give all diligence, and take all heed, that *we* may enter into this rest. Let us not, through negligence or sloth, through a willingness to gratify the flesh, or an unwillingness to bear the cross, come short of so great Salvation. As good soldiers of Jesus Christ, let us fight manfully under his banner. "Laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily

besets us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus:" who Himself entered not into glory, but first he suffered. Though we may have much to endure in a religious course; yet let us not be discouraged. Let us look forward to the recompence of reward. Let us remember that there will be a glorious and everlasting Rest from all our labours. In due time we shall reap if we faint not.

But I fear there are some who, notwithstanding the conclusion thus forcibly pressed on them, will still choose the service of the world, and the work of sin. Alas! my brethren, pride not yourselves on your wisdom, for you are making a most foolish, a most miserable choice. Sin is a hard master: and the world's service a laborious service. And what will your wages be? Everlasting shame, sorrow, and torment. To *you* there remains no Rest. For *you* there will be no rest, day nor night. As here you have no rest from sin, so in Hell you will have no rest from suffering. Lay this truth to heart now: before it is too late. Break off your sins by repentance, while the Spirit is yet striving with you. Listen unto Him, who has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

THE END.

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